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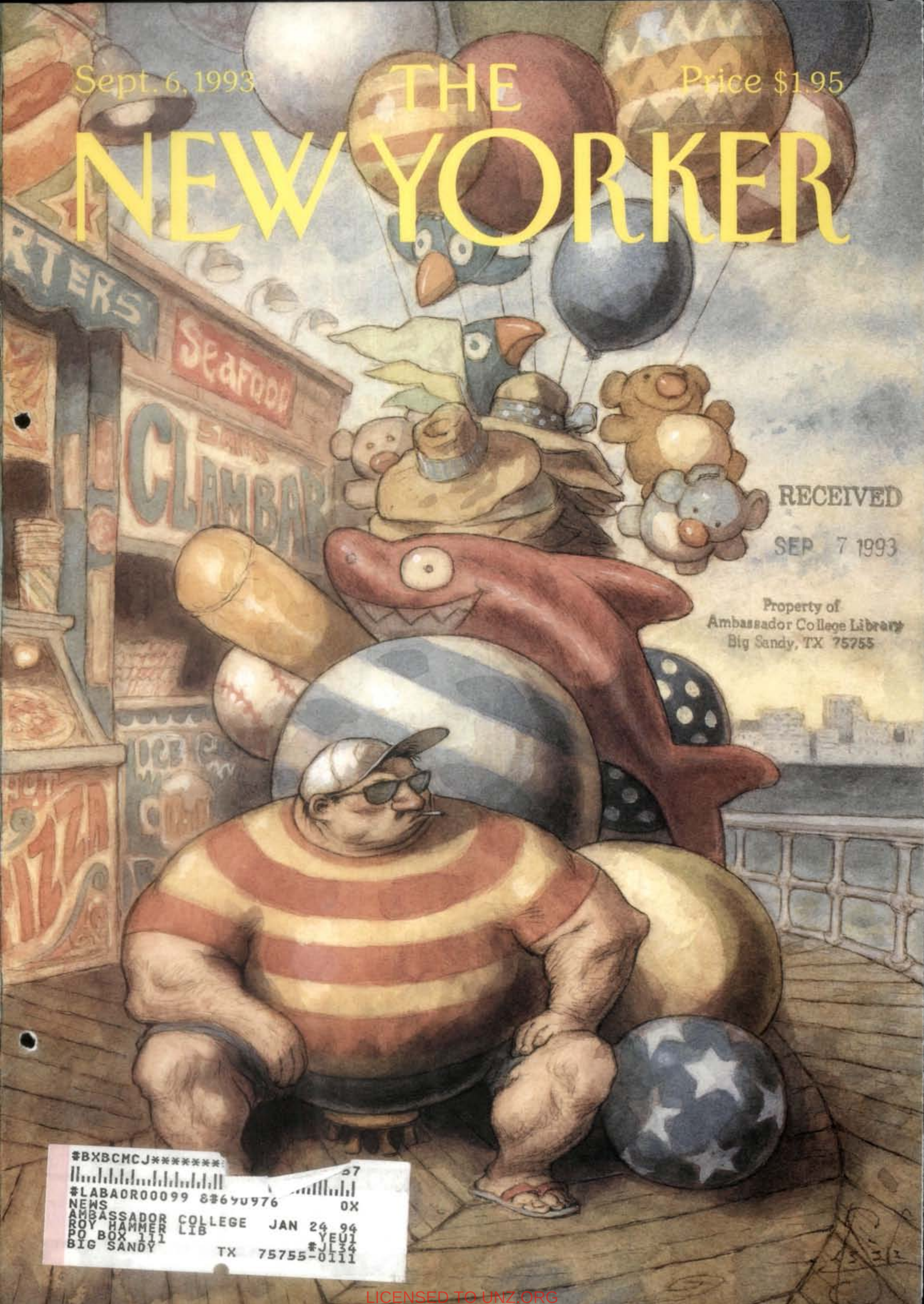

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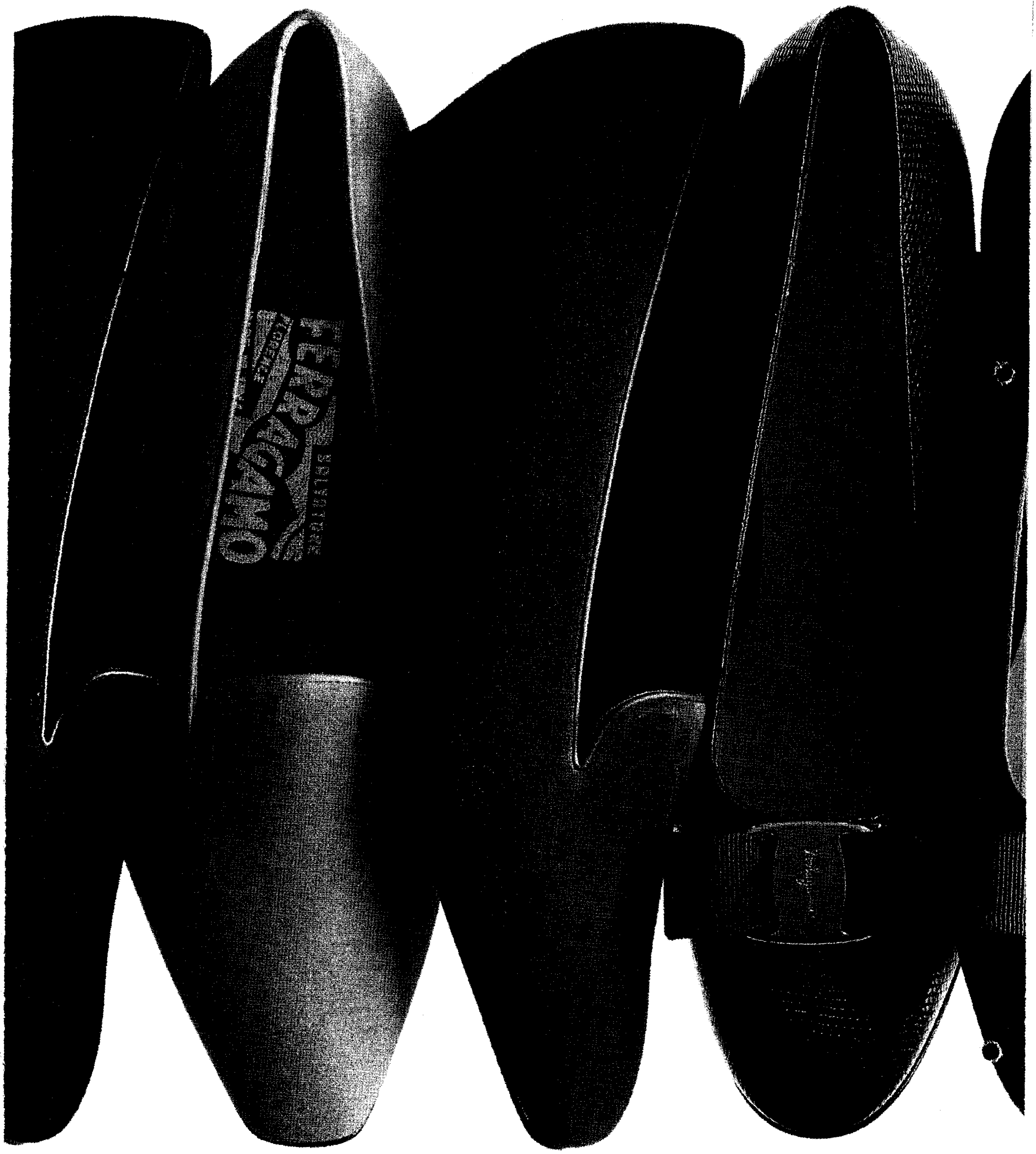
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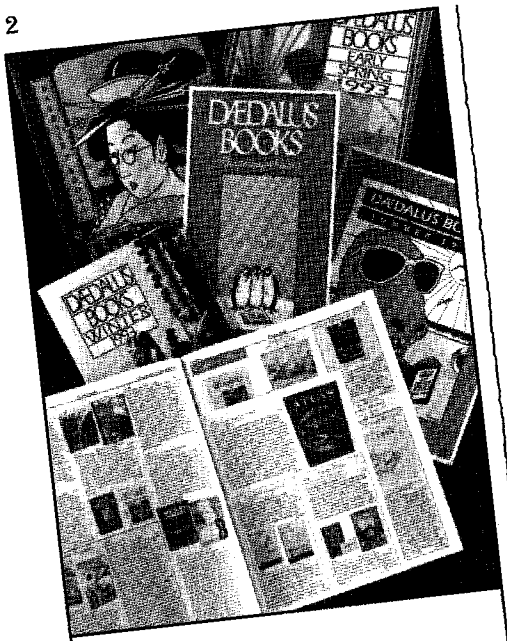

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THE NEW YORKER

SEPTEMBER 6, 1993

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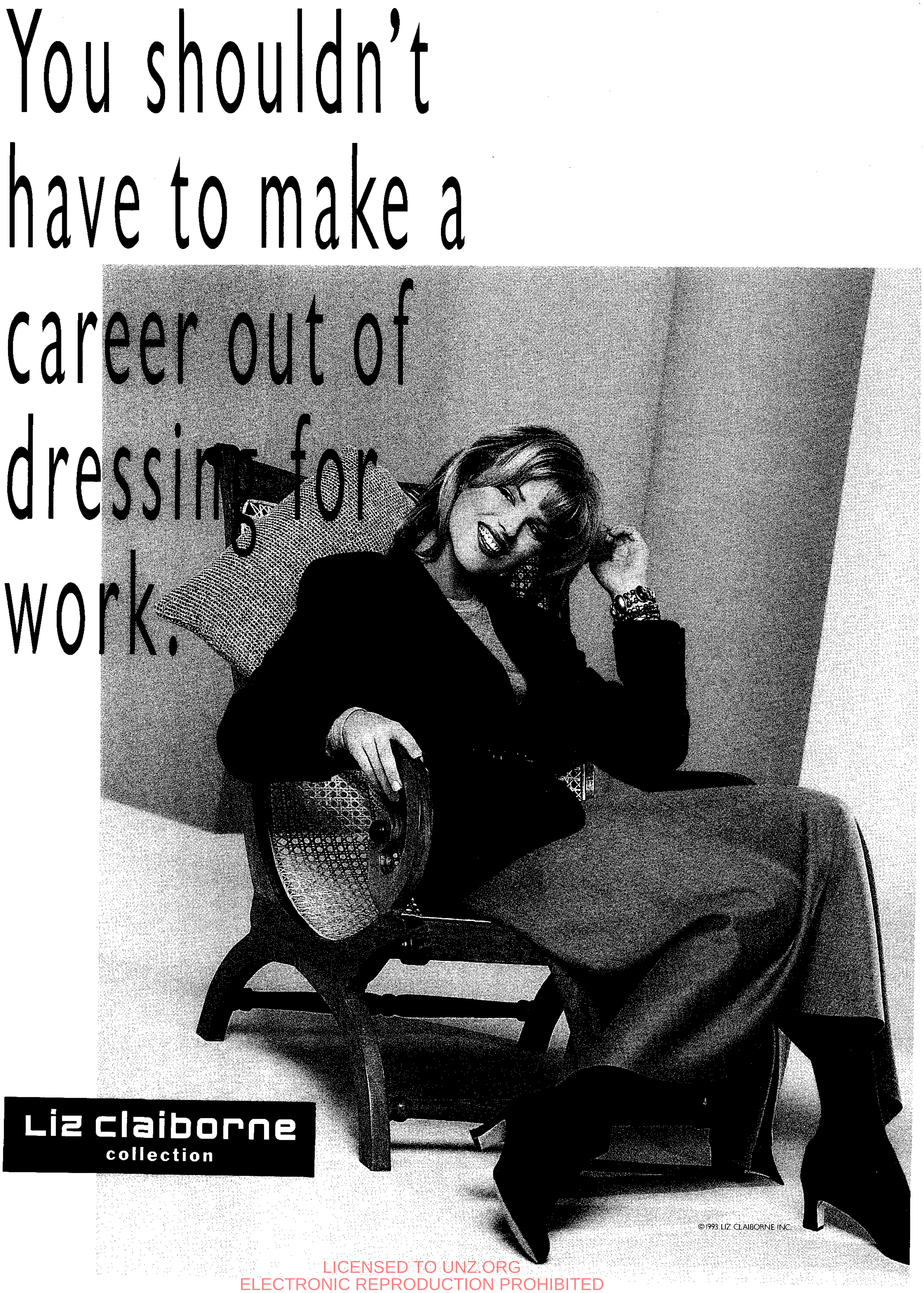
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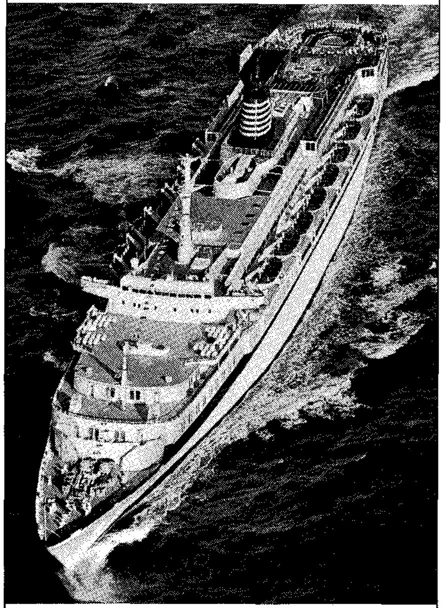

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COMMENT

TO FIT THE CRIME

It has become a ritual of the Presidency—a kind of policy equivalent of lighting the national Christmas tree or supervising the Easter egg hunt—for each occupant of the Oval Office to submit a "crime bill" to Congress. The basic liturgy does not change: there is invariably a call for tougher penalties, longer jail terms, and more cops on the street. But the ritual evolves in small ways, and no crime bill ever precisely duplicates the one before it.

President Clinton's crime bill, announced in a mid-August photo opportunity featuring the requisite rows of uniformed police officers, reflects both aspects of the ritual. It is nearly identical to President Bush's 1992 crime bill in certain of its most cynical provisions. Most lamentably, Mr. Clinton has carried over his predecessor's plan to broaden the federal death-penalty statute—a proposal that has been much ridiculed for establishing an improbably high number of new capital crimes (forty-seven, by actual count), including the assassination of a federal chicken inspector. The ridicule misses the point. The forty-seven new capital crimes are nearly all varieties of a single crime—murder—and if it were good and wise and useful to put murderers to death there would be no reason to exempt the murderers of federal chicken inspectors. But it is not. Capital punishment is morally dubious and practically fruitless. It is an evil thing, not so much because it is cruel to the prisoner as because it demeans the authority that inflicts it.

The federal government has not carried out an execution since 1963, and it is unlikely to do so any time soon even if the President's bill becomes law. (There is no federal method of or facility for execution, and the Clinton bill neither specifies the one nor establishes the other.) The death penalty seems to bring out Mr. Clinton's basest political instincts, as when, during last year's campaign, he rushed home to Arkansas to preside over the execution of a brain-damaged inmate; and the most charitable interpretation of his espousal of it now is that his real intention is not to get the federal tumbrels rolling but merely to pander to the execution-hungry section of the electorate.

Still, the President's crime program has its virtues. It provides funds for new

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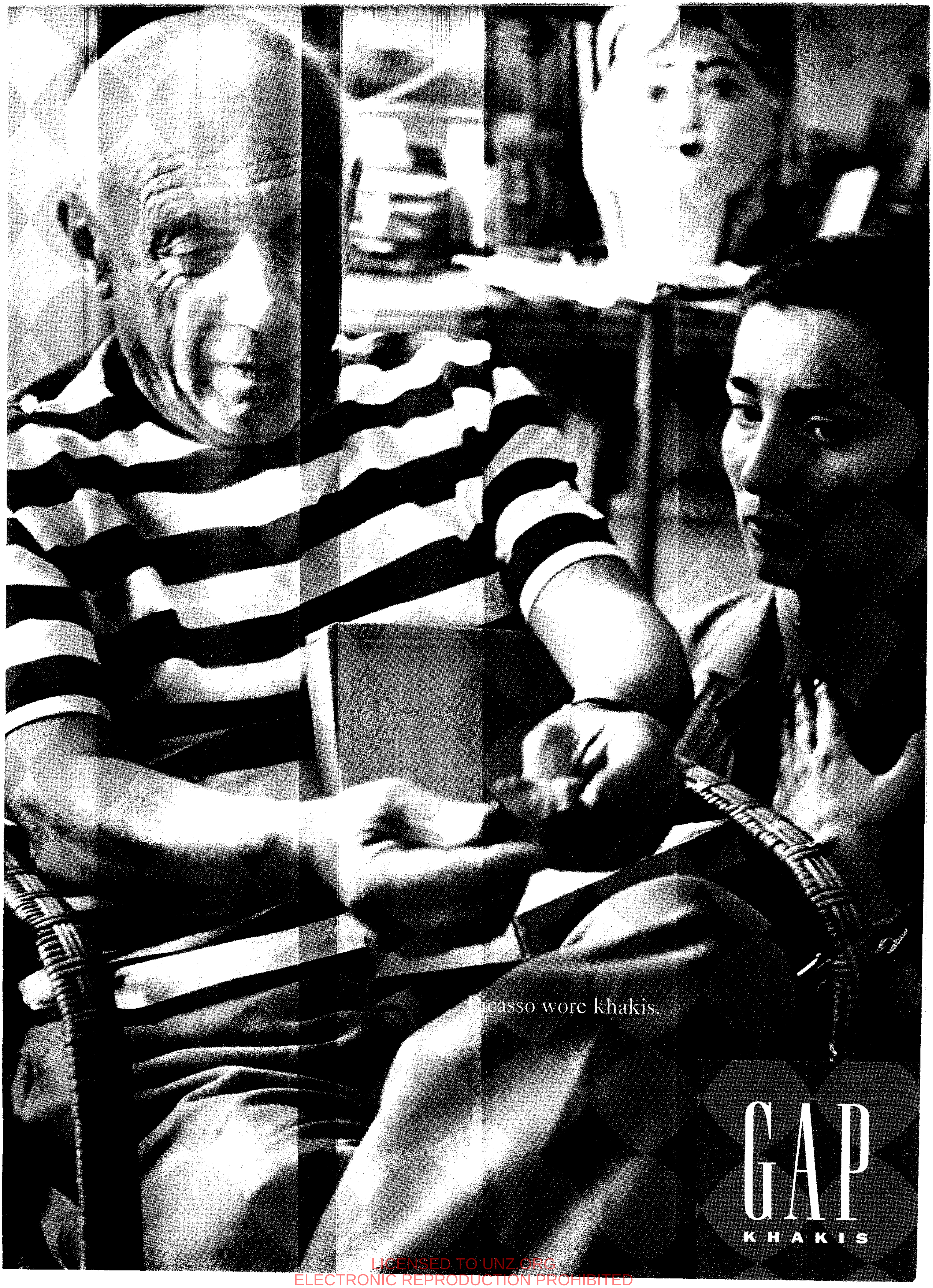
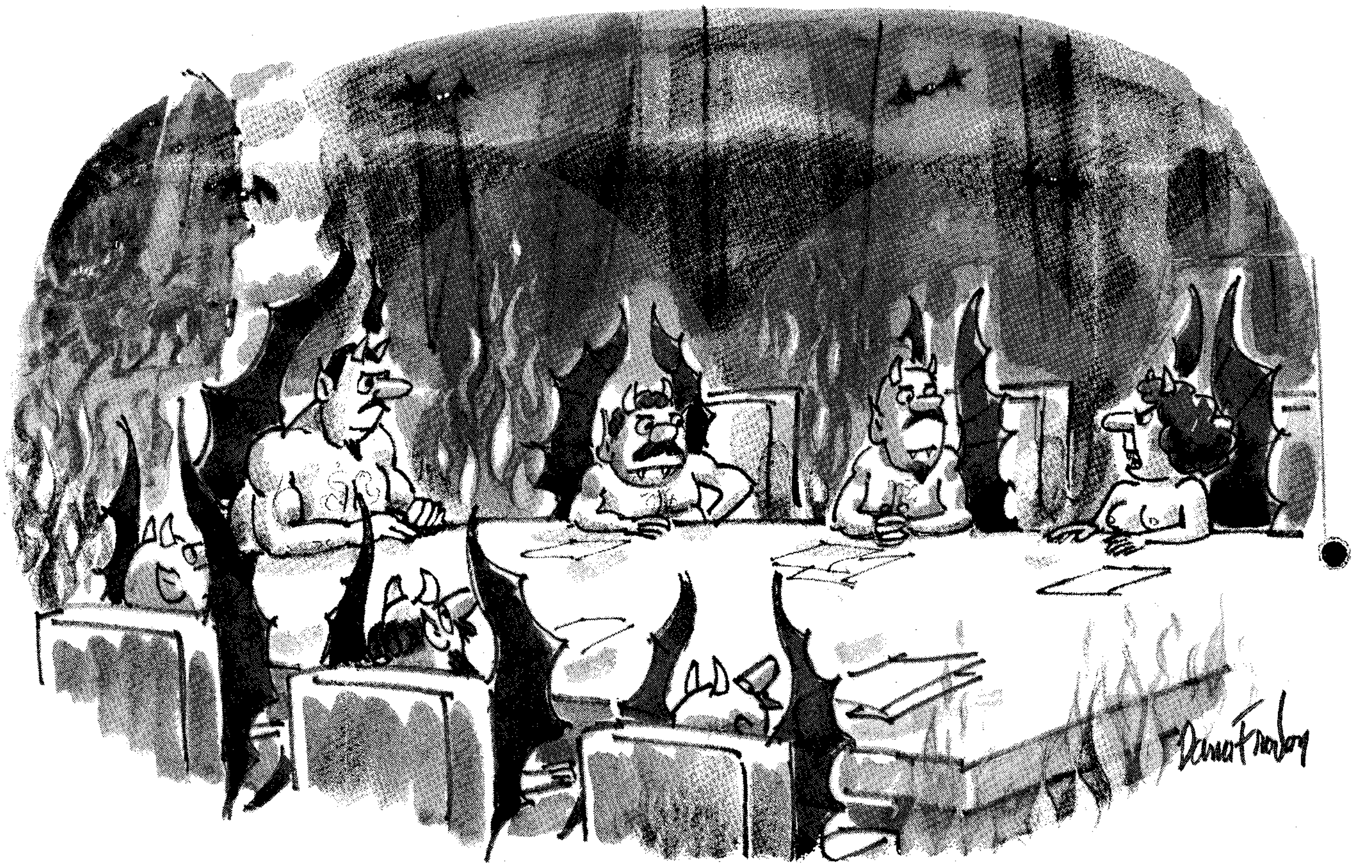

Picasso wore khakis.
GAP
KHAKIS

local police officers—a handful at first, but fifty thousand over the next five years. Moreover, the bill demonstrates that the White House recognizes that the police should not be an occupying force but, rather, become an integrated (in all senses of the word) part of the community. To this end, the bill endorses the Police Corps, a kind of R.O.T.C. for cops, which offers college scholarships to students who agree to spend four years as police officers. Adam Walinsky, who was one of Robert Kennedy's closest aides, has spent years crusading for this idea, and it deserves to be tried at the federal level. Another worthwhile program the Clinton bill would establish, called Troops-to-Cops, would retrain military personnel as street cops. In announcing the crime bill, the President also promised to fight for the Brady Bill, which would impose a five-day waiting period for the purchase of handguns and assault weapons, and he issued executive orders to stop the importation of semi-automatic assault pistols and to close a legal loophole that has let just about anybody who bothers to apply become a federally licensed "gun dealer" and gain wholesale access to firearms. So the President's crime program will help a bit here and there, on the margins. What it won't do is make a serious dent in the crime problem.

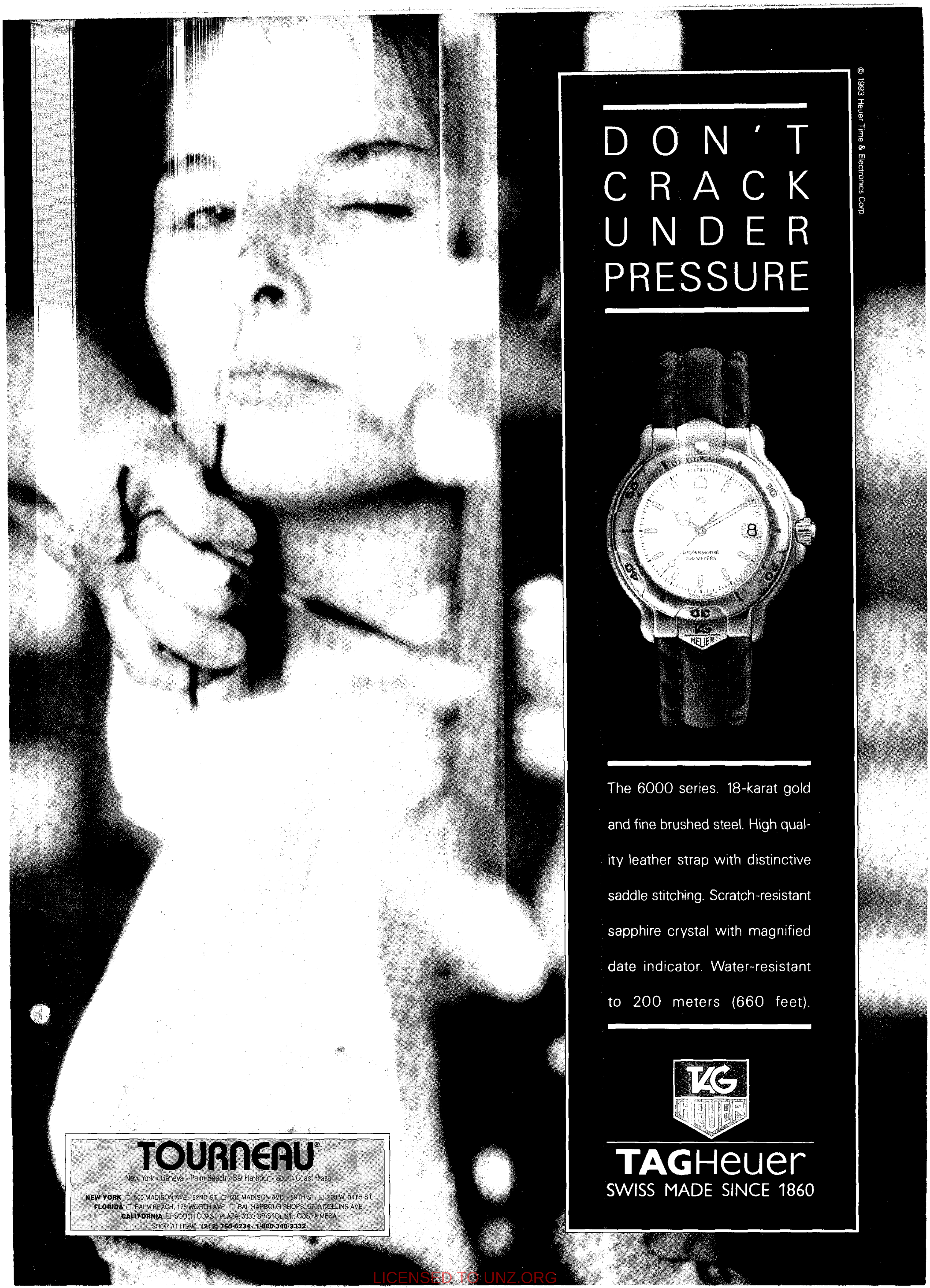
For a long time—at least twenty years—it has been politically hazardous to suggest that crime is an economic and social problem as well as a matter of individual moral responsibility. In part the public's antipathy to this idea is a reaction to the view, which in truth hardly anyone actually held, that because crime is associated with social breakdown and economic deprivation the fault is "society's" and it's beastly to blame the poor criminal. In part, too, it is a reflection of a general loss of faith in public solutions to public problems—especially the problem of poverty. But crime *is* associated with, if not "caused by," a range of economic and social pathologies. The unemployed, the uneducated, and the alienated are more apt to commit violent crimes than are the employed, the credentialed, and the contented. The deprived are more likely to be victims, too. In 1991, people whose annual family income was under seventy-five hundred dollars were three times as likely—and those whose income was between twenty-five and thirty thousand dollars were half again as likely—to be victims of violent crimes as people whose income was over fifty thousand dollars.

The liberal's lament is no less valid for being unfashionable: crime is a social problem, and the only way to address it in a realistic way is to attack the social ills that breed it. A crime plan limited to enforcement and punishment is like a health plan that covers only surgery. On the large scale, prevention—of crime as of illness—is both more humane and more effective.

In the nineteen-fifties, at the height of the Cold War, the Eisenhower Administration sold the interstate-highway system to the American people as a way of bolstering national security. And so it did, if in a rather attenuated sense. By a similar logic, a health-care plan would indeed be a crime plan; so, even more, would an education plan, and so would a strategy for economic revival. It stands to reason that a society that guaranteed its citizens secure access to health care, a good high-school education, and a fair chance at a decent job would be a less violent, less dangerous society in which to live. That's the kind of society the President talks about when there's no police photo op, and if he can lead the country in that direction it will be the most effective crime bill of all. ♦



"It's a disgrace! Ten years ago, I was the only woman on the staff, and today I'm *still* *the only woman on the staff."*



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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

Unleashed

THE story of a woman whose breasts get caught in an automatic door wouldn't seem like the most promising premise for a musical. In fact, it's hard to imagine the investor pitch for such an enterprise—but then it's hard to imagine the typical Broadway investor making his or her way to the church basement at 351 East 74th Street, where the spirited improv group Chicago City Limits recently made hay of just such a notion. Like many of the ideas in the group's current show, "Let Loose the Dogs of Improv," this tidbit was suggested by a member of the audience. Leslie Upson, the only woman among the evening's five performers (the others are Wayne Barker, Carl Kissin, John Cameron Telfer, and John Webber), had asked people for real-life problems encountered over the past twenty-four hours. No idea, she said, was too bizarre to be considered. The open invite prompted so many lewd suggestions from back-of-the-class types that by the time a dark-haired young woman piped up with the door story the performers were grateful. Miss Upson, forced by default into the lead, was particularly inspired. After the momentous collision, she tottered about for so long that she looked like a candidate for a Breathalyzer test. The audience was equally giddy, as they should have been: "Let Loose the Dogs of Improv" is marvellous fun.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Black Comedy/White Liars—Two comedies from the sixties by Peter Shaffer. The double bill features Anne Bobby, Keene Curtis, Peter MacNicol, Nancy Marchand, Kate Mulgrew, and Brian Murray. Preview on Sept. 1 at 2. Opens Sept. 1 at 8. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches—The first half of Tony Kushner's epic work is set in 1985, at the height of the Reagan counter-revolution, and it maps the trickle-down effect of self-interest as Kushner's characters ruthlessly pursue their private and public destinies. The Pulitzer Prize-winning play is a saga about sexual politics, death, and decency. Not to be missed. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/31/93.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Annie Warbucks—Kathryn Zaremba, an infant phenomenon if ever there was one, has the title role in this beguiling sequel to "Annie." After sixteen years, the old team—Thomas Meehan (book) and Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin (music and lyrics)—is still in top form. Donna McKechnie, Harve Presnell, Harvey Evans, Marguerite McIntyre, and Raymond Thorne—to say nothing of a merry scattering of orphans—give strong support. Choreography by Peter Gennaro, scenery by Ming Cho Lee, costumes by Theoni V. Aldredge, and lighting by Ken Billington. (8/23 & 30/93) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Blood Brothers—A glum non-musical musical, imported from Britain, about twin boys who are separated at birth. The boys later become friends, love the same girl, and die violent deaths. Willy Russell wrote book, music, and lyrics, to no avail. The cast includes Shaun and David Cassidy and Petula Clark. (5/10/93) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The First Lulu—Eric Bentley's version of a play by Frank Wedekind, presented by the Jean Cocteau Repertory. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Fool Moon—Bill Irwin and David Shiner are the inspired clowns in a show that is perfection itself. The only sound you'll hear is the merry music of the Red Clay Ramblers and the abundant laughter of the audience. (3/8/93) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. Closes Sept. 5.)

Forbidden Broadway 1993—Once again, a galaxy of parodies that sharpen into satire. Among the shows under consideration are "Guys and Dolls," "Falsettos," "Les Misérables," and "The Phantom of the Opera." Gerard Alessandrini, as if you had to be told, is the clever writer and director, and Susanne Blakeslee, Allison Briner, Brad Oscar, and Craig Wells are the performers. (1/25/93) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Howard Crabtree's Whoop-Dee-Doo!—In the opening number, the cast describes this show as "old-fashioned entertainment with our special twist." There's not a better way to put it. These sixteen original songs range from a wistful love note to Elizabeth Taylor (Hilton Wilding Todd Fisher Burton Burton Warner Fortensky) to a tribute to Private Banana by his fellow-soldiers ("the new recruit is a fruit") to "Blue Flame," a gutsy number sung by a moth. Mr. Crabtree and his collaborators are witty and topical, and his costumes are ingenious and not in the least evocative of the tongue-in-cheek theme of the evening—"Less Is More." "Whoop-Dee-Doo!" is an exuberant delight. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. For information about tickets, call 777-7474.)

Jeffrey—A comedy, by Paul Rudnick, about love in the age of AIDS. It is less a fleshed-out play than a series of Scenes from Gay Life, but Mr. Rudnick can quip with the best of them. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

Kiss of the Spider Woman—A musical, based on the novel by Manuel Puig, with a distinguished book by Terrence McNally, a star performance by Brent Carver, as the heroic homosexual window dresser, and another by the redoubtable Chita Rivera, in the title role. Harold Prince was the director. The songs are by John Kander and Fred Ebb. Mr. Carver leaves the cast after Sept. 4; Jeff Hyslop takes his place starting Sept. 6. (5/24/93) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

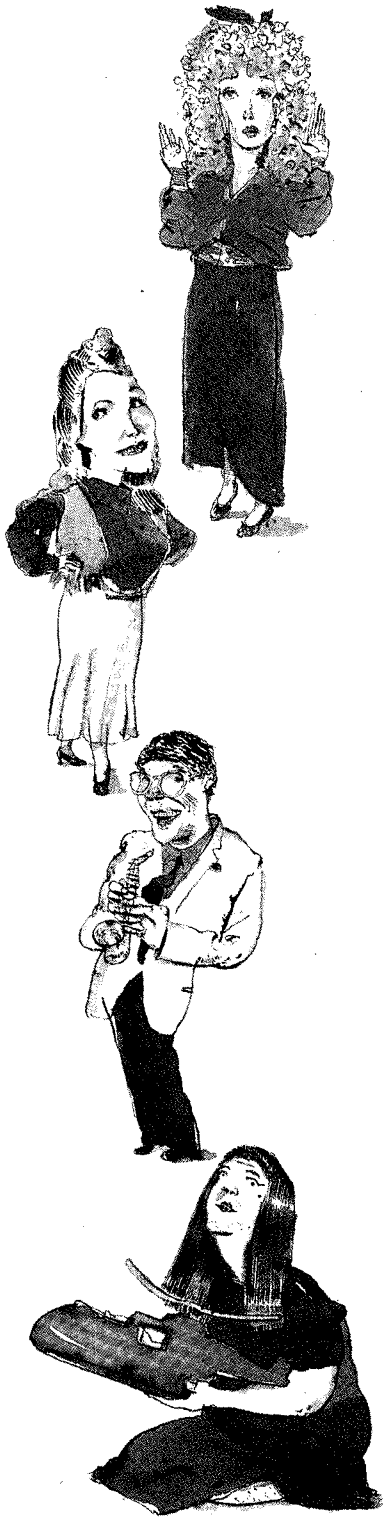
Later Life—The reunion, after thirty years, of a middle-aged man and woman who were once in love is at the heart of this play by A. R. Gurney. The scene is a cocktail party in Boston, where the couple are constantly interrupted by the other guests, who arrive two by two. Mr. Gurney has written with his customary wit and perception, and the actors do him proud. The play was seen recently at Playwrights Horizons. (6/14/93) (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Let Loose the Dogs of Improv—Chicago City Limits' current show. (Jan Hus Playhouse, 351 E. 74th St. 772-8707.)

A Perfect Ganesh—Terrence McNally's play tells the story of two middle-aged women from Connecticut making what turns out to be a pilgrimage through India. With Charlotte Moore, Helen Stenborg, Garret Dillahunt, and Domi[illegible] Cuskern. John Tillinger directed. (7/12/93) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Sept. 19.)

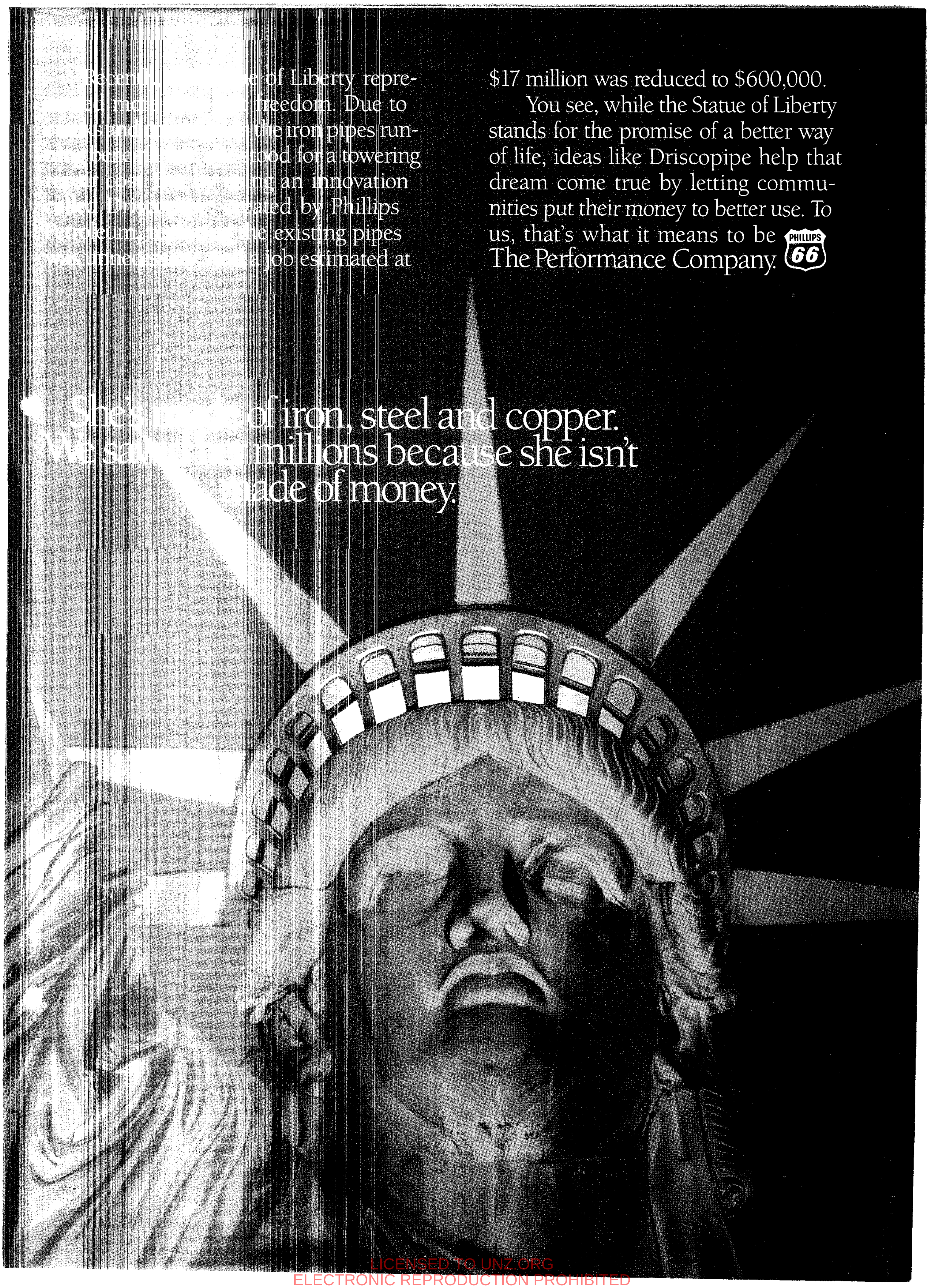
Shakespeare for My Father—A marvellous one-woman show, in which Lynn Redgrave reviews her own life in a search for her unloving father, Michael Redgrave. She combines anecdotes, brilliant thumbnail impersonations of British actors, and wry reminiscence with passages from Shakespeare. (5/10/93) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

The Sisters Rosensweig—Wendy Wasserstein's play, a comedy with serious undertones, is about the reunion in London of three American Jewish sisters—an international banker, a travel writer, and a wife and mother who's a professional dispenser of advice. The spirit of Chekhov hovers but never intrudes. Laughter



Susanne Blakeslee, Allison Briner, Brad Oscar, and Craig Wells in "Forbidden Broadway 1993."

BARRY BLITT



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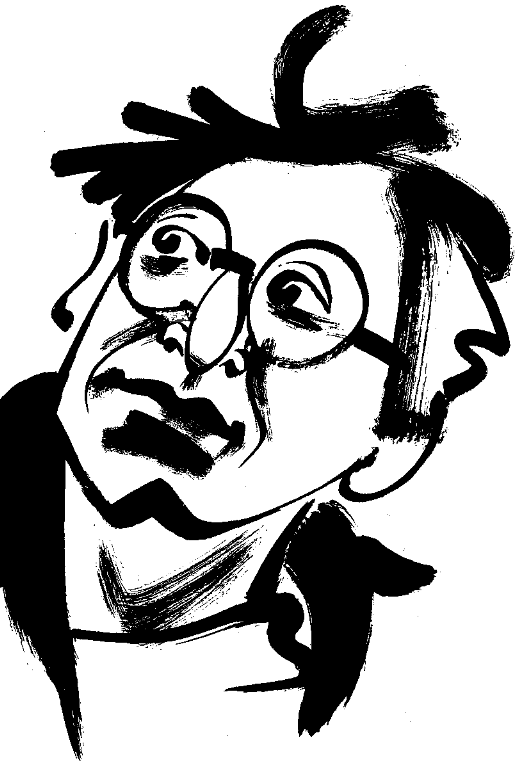
is continuous. With Michael Learned, Linda Lavin, Joanne Camp, and Hal Linden. (11/2/92) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Sweet Daddy and Amazing Grace—Clyde Wayne MacMillian's musical is the classic preacher-meets-floozy tale with a few twists, some voodoo, and a lot of gospel singing. Christopher M. H. Wilkerson and Elmeria Rose are charming as the leads, and their voices are terrific, as are those of all the rest of the cast. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. For reservations, call 886-9850.)

Three Hotels—This new play by Jon Robin Baitz is no more than a technical exercise, but what technique! Debra Monk and Ron Rifkin are superb as husband and wife; the versatile Joe Mantello directed. (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

The Who's Tommy—Pete Townshend's music—however muted for Broadway—has an indubitable thrill, but director Des McAnuff's production is caught on the horns of a theatrical dilemma that no amount of slick, exhausting spectacle can resolve. The hero, that deaf, dumb, and blind kid, is spectacularly passive, and thus unreachable, unknowable, and essentially undramatic. (5/3/93) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)



John Zorn at the Knitting Factory.

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **JELLY'S LAST JAM:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. (Closes Sept. 5.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **OLEANNA:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200. (Closes Sept. 5.)

NIGHT LIFE

Zorn Spree

A LOCAL boy with a knack for otherworldly noises, the musician-composer-arranger John Zorn has been hailed as the heir apparent to those princes of the avant-garde Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Of course, it never dawned on Reich or Glass to rework the soundtrack scores of a spaghetti-Western composer, as Zorn did on "The Big Gundown," his dazzling tribute to Ennio Morricone, which premièred at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1986 and was released as an LP the same year. Nor has either of Zorn's noted peers ever been known to stuff a toy football down the bell of a saxophone, as Zorn has on occasion. His deconstructive sax technique allows for sound effects like duck calls and squeals; he's quite inventive on keyboards and clarinet, as well.

Zorn's eclectic, idiosyncratic œuvre—mix diverse classical influences with a brash experimental sensibility informed by free jazz, add modern rock and rap to taste—will be showcased every night throughout September at the Knitting Factory. This week's highlights include early works like "Linear Bubbles" and "Livestock Quotations," as well as "Ruan Lingyu," a piece written for nine players and three narrators in Chinese. On the last Sunday of every month, the club continues its ongoing performance of "Cobra," a work the composer recorded as a group improvisation in 1984. The official occasion for this encyclopedic monthlong celebration is Zorn's fortieth birthday, but who needs an excuse?

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Beginning on Sept. 7 in the Oak Room, vocalist **BETTY JOHNSON,** who some thirty years ago rendered standards in all the big clubs and on TV shows hosted by Ed Sullivan and Jack Paar, offers a musical scrapbook of her career, a veritable *Who's Who* of musical-theatre bards: Sammy Kahn, Irving Berlin, Kurt Weill, Rodgers and Hart, Lerner and Lane, George and Ira, Dorothy Fields, Harold Arlen. Pianist Tony Monte and guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli accompany Ms. Johnson. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Some night spots cater to a specific clientele, but Arthur's is a free-for-all. It's a small, strange Village bar that looks like a pack rat's attic. In the back is a compact, bar-encircled stage, where one can usually find patrons listening to, cheering on, and joining in with the musicians. Sundays belong to Lee Lorenz and his band.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings and mounted O'Keeffian animal skulls. Look closer and you'll find that the skulls are wearing earrings. After the show, be sure to check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which looks like the indoor food market of your dreams. Starting Sept. 7: Jamie DeRoy and Friends. Closed Mondays.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—A jazz house with a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. Sept. 1: the Nando Gabrieli trio. Sept. 2: the George Coleman, Jr., trio. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Once you get past the rough bits here—the hordes of tourists, the cattle-car seating, the stiff prices—you're likely to find yourself face to face with some of the biggest names in jazz. Pianist **MC COY TYNER,** known for his work with John Coltrane in the sixties, leads a trio through Sept. 5. Starting on Sept. 7, the percussionist and bebop pioneer **MAX ROACH** performs with a "double quartet," consisting of his regular backup players augmented by the Uptown String Quartet. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront, Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or espresso and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule, so it's often too late when one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here. A frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping and watching the door.

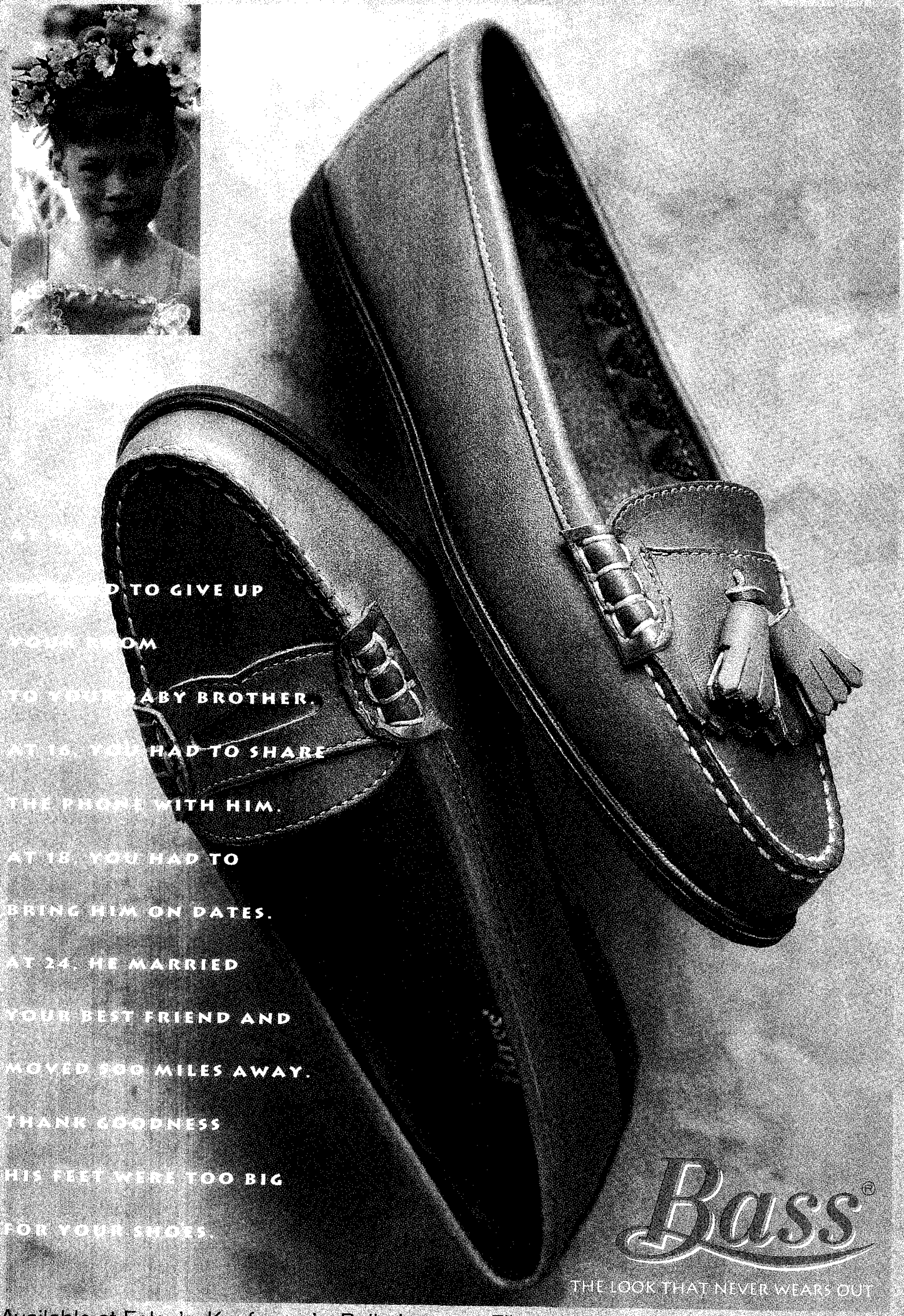
CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club—a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti—is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to burn brightly here.

Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. (989-9319)—In the basement of this tucked-away Village restaurant-bar is a narrow, white-brick-walled room, decorated with a few tables and steampipes, where you'll find music, poetry readings, and theatre of the cramped. The restaurant itself is a wine-and-candlelight neighborhood café.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The bright, clean, wedge-shaped downstairs bar has French windows giving onto the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the clamor indoors is far greater. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, and the waitresses sing/shout pop standards with risqué lyrics and fire off wisecracks across the room; patrons are encouraged to take the mike, too. Upstairs, there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—A softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz grotto. The singer Carol Sloane continues her stay through Sept. 5. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Dining.

Grand, 76 E. 13th St. (777-0600)—A cross between an old-fashioned split-level night club and a parking garage decorated for a senior prom. Despite the balloons and the candy-colored lights, this is a serious room for serious rock-and-rolling. You can either vibrate up front, near a wall-o'-speakers, or lounge around the bar in the back and follow the show on a video monitor. On Sept. 1, two New York-based hard-rock bands, **KIX** and the **VIBES,** will be on hand to inaugurate Tommy Gunn's Rock and Roll Night at the Grand, a new Wednesday-night feature instituted by former Cat Club promoter Gunn. Cry of Love, a progressive pop band, appears on Sept. 2.



AT [illegible]
YOU HAD TO GIVE UP
YOUR ROOM
TO YOUR BABY BROTHER.
AT 16, YOU HAD TO SHARE
THE PHONE WITH HIM.
AT 18, YOU HAD TO
BRING HIM ON DATES.
AT 24, HE MARRIED
YOUR BEST FRIEND AND
MOVED 500 MILES AWAY.
THANK GOODNESS
HIS FEET WERE TOO BIG
FOR YOUR SHOES.

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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St.—This two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Physically, the place is sagging a bit, but that's part of its appeal. Latter-day rockabilly hero **REVEREND HORTON HEAT** appears on Sept. 1. Having begun his career by playing guitar in a Texas juvenile correctional facility, the Reverend has for the past seven years entertained audiences across the country with his Vegas-style stage antics and the irreverent sermons he delivers between songs. And what other roots rocker can list among his credits both opening for Dolly Parton and stage diving for the Cramps? For concert information, call 249-8870. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday night, at the Continental Club. The dancers all share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld drawings. Up front at the bar, you can keep your eye on the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. Pianist **NAT JONES** plays alone Sept. 1-2, and with bassist **SANTI DEBRIANO** Sept. 3-4.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A monthlong nightly celebration of John Zorn's music kicks off this week. On Sept. 1, a gang of Knit regulars plays early Zorn works, including "Lacrosse," "Hockey," and "Livestock Quotations." Guests include Tim Berne on saxophone, David Shea on turntables, and Jim Staley on electronically prepared trombone. The Sept. 2 show features Guy Klucevsek playing "Road Runner" on free bass accordion. Funk bassist Bill Laswell is among the musicians on hand Sept. 3-4 to deliver "Painkiller," a powerful dose of speed metal. On Sept. 6, "Ruan Lingyu" will be performed. On Sept. 5, a rendition of "Elegy," a symphonic piece for strings, turntables, and growls, will accompany Ella Troyano's slide show, "The Clinical Hysteria Hour." Anthony Coleman, Marc Ribot, and others perform "Xu Feng" on Sept. 7.

La Cave on First, 1125 First Ave., at 62nd St. (759-4011)—Though situated in the basement of an Upper East Side Mexican restaurant (Pancho Villa), this is an establishment worth checking out. There's nothing trendy or even distinguishing about it, and that may be the secret of its appeal. The entertainment varies, from tap dancing one night to gospel the next.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the square-by-definition Upper East Side club scene. Don't expect to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. The celebrated gospel-flavored blues of the **HOLMES BROTHERS** is featured on Sept. 1. Darrell Nulisch and the Texas Heat play on Sept. 2; Keri Leigh and the Blue Devils, another export of the Lone Star State, arrive on Sept. 4. Sept. 7 is Reggae Night, with the Uprising.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. The **JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION** appears on Sept. 3. As a founding member of the now defunct Pussy Galore, Spencer needs no introduction on the punk scene. His Blues Explosion is a trio—two guitars, drums, no bass—and their sound is a mixture of the Cramps' minimalism and the Music Machine's classic sixties garage rock. Songs that begin as seemingly pointless, rambling tunes suddenly lock into compelling punk grooves that have a Stax/Volt edge to them, while Spencer squeals and moans like Nick Cave in search of soul. Definitely different.

Metropolis, 31 Union Sq. W., at 16th St. (675-2300)—The basement of this restaurant, a small, tidy, marble-pillared space, is the site of various musical happenings, most notably a club called Mowax. Every Thursday night, the club's proprietors arrange blind dates between jazz and rap. As d.j.s spin jazz, funk, and hip-hop records, a loose collective of musicians and rappers take turns improvising. You never know who might show up, but Roy Hargrove, Branford Marsalis, and the members of Digable Planets are a few of the artists who have passed through.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret with plenty of niceties, if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and an amazing view. On Sept. 7, the enchanting singer-pianist-composer **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY,** a fixture on the cabaret circuit, begins an engagement. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's castoffs, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples who remember how to dance. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Society jazz band, Tuesdays to Jim Lawyer and his Bluebird orchestra, Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and Sam Ulano and his Swingers, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. The **MIGHTY SPARROW,** that giant of calypso music, appears on Sept. 4. Sparrow's influence on the music of Trinidad and Tobago is widespread: he stretched the form with his showmanship; his strong, clear voice; and his songwriting, which ranges from the humorous to the pointedly socially conscious. He has a catalogue of hits that dates back to the fifties, and his victory in last year's Calypso Monarch competition proves he's still got the goods. Closed Sundays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A pretty serious jazz shrine where you have to pass within inches of the stage to reach the rest rooms. The **CEDAR WALTON** trio appears through Sept. 2, with pianist Walton, bassist David Williams, and drummer Billy Higgins. On Sept. 3-5: a stellar quintet, featuring trumpeter **ANDERS BERGCRANTZ,** sax player **BOB ROCKWELL,** pianist **RICHIE BEIRACH,** bassist **RON MC CLURE,** and drummer **ADAM NUSSBAUM.** An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge, is every bit as over the top as the rest of the establishment, but the bookings have been impressive. The **RAY ALEXANDER** sextet, with pianist **KENNY BARRON,** continues through Sept. 5. Beginning on Sept 7: the **FREDDY COLE** trio. Dining.

Time Café, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Hidden within this trendy restaurant is a two-story club called Fez. Upstairs is a sumptuous Moroccan bar and lounge appointed with satin couches, mosaic tables, and Arabian-style fixtures. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is rather plain in comparison, but still a sleek and comfortable spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG**

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to make sure
the trees
will be here
tomorrow?"

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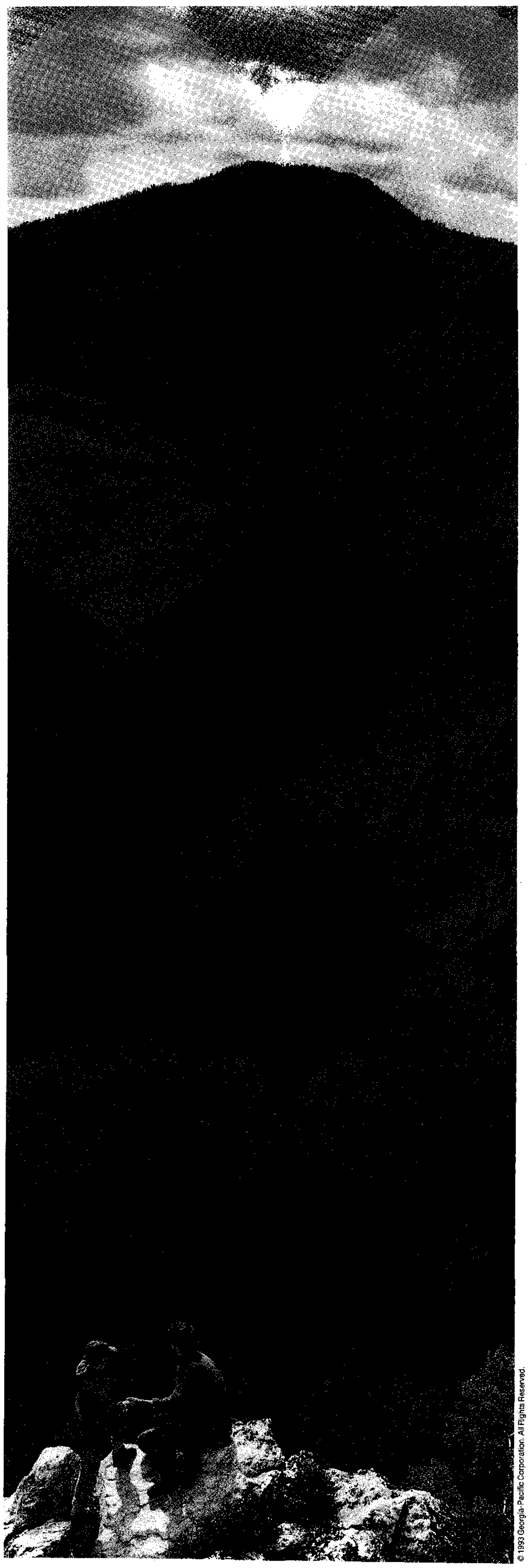
Stephen A. Delfs

Steve Delfs
Forester

Georgia-Pacific



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UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM

They're The McLaughlin Group. Each with a view that's contentious and contagious. (clockwise from left) Jack Germond, Clarence Page, John McLaughlin, Eleanor Clift, Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes.
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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

BAND packs them in every Thursday. The fourteen-piece ensemble concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, Charles Mingus. On Sept. 4, **JEFF BUCKLEY** performs. The son of folk singer Tim Buckley, Jeff uses electric guitar and a contemporary songwriting sensibility to lend new juice to the rootsy tradition he's heir to. Dining.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Thanks to low lighting, muraled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored stamped-tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main orders of business here. On Sept. 2, **IPSO FACTO** plays reggae. A double bill of modern rock with a decided R. & B. accent follows on Sept. 3, when Milo Z performs with guests Dry White Toast. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, feels, and smells like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. The **BILLY CHILDS** trio, making its Vanguard début, playing through Sept. 5, with Childs on piano, Michael Bowie on bass, and Billy Kilson on drums. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.**

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: a place where you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. Through Sept. 4: pianist Lynne Arriale, with bassist Scott Colley and drummer Steve Davis. Closed Sundays and Labor Day.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

"UM, you know, uh, this is a juice bar," stammered the young man craning through the window of the ticket booth on Liquid Sky Magic night (Wednesdays at 179 West Broadway; for information, call 226-0657). "No alcohol. This is a young crowd, you know." He inspected us. "Really young." Hell, you're as young as you feel, right?

No one not this young can feel this young without hypnosis. No way could there have been a child in view with memories of any President before Carter. And there were two day camps full of them. Downstairs, in XL T-shirts, shorts baggier than duffelbags, and more headgear than the College of Cardinals, they danced in groups—or, rather, they stood in small circles taking turns, like jazz soloists, as the music moved them. With unformed bones and gangly limbs, each had developed an idiosyncratic command of his or her own fluidity.

Upstairs in the lounge, it was like a well-behaved sleepover, with more than a hundred nightshirted kids seated on the floor, in chairs, on tables, and on each other, either silently watching cartoons on a black-and-white TV or engaging in quiet time. Three Asian girls with long blond hair braided each other's tresses. We tried pulling our T-shirt out of our jeans, but there was no hope. We stepped over the bodies and left. It was 4 A.M. Now you know where your children are.

ART

Class of '80

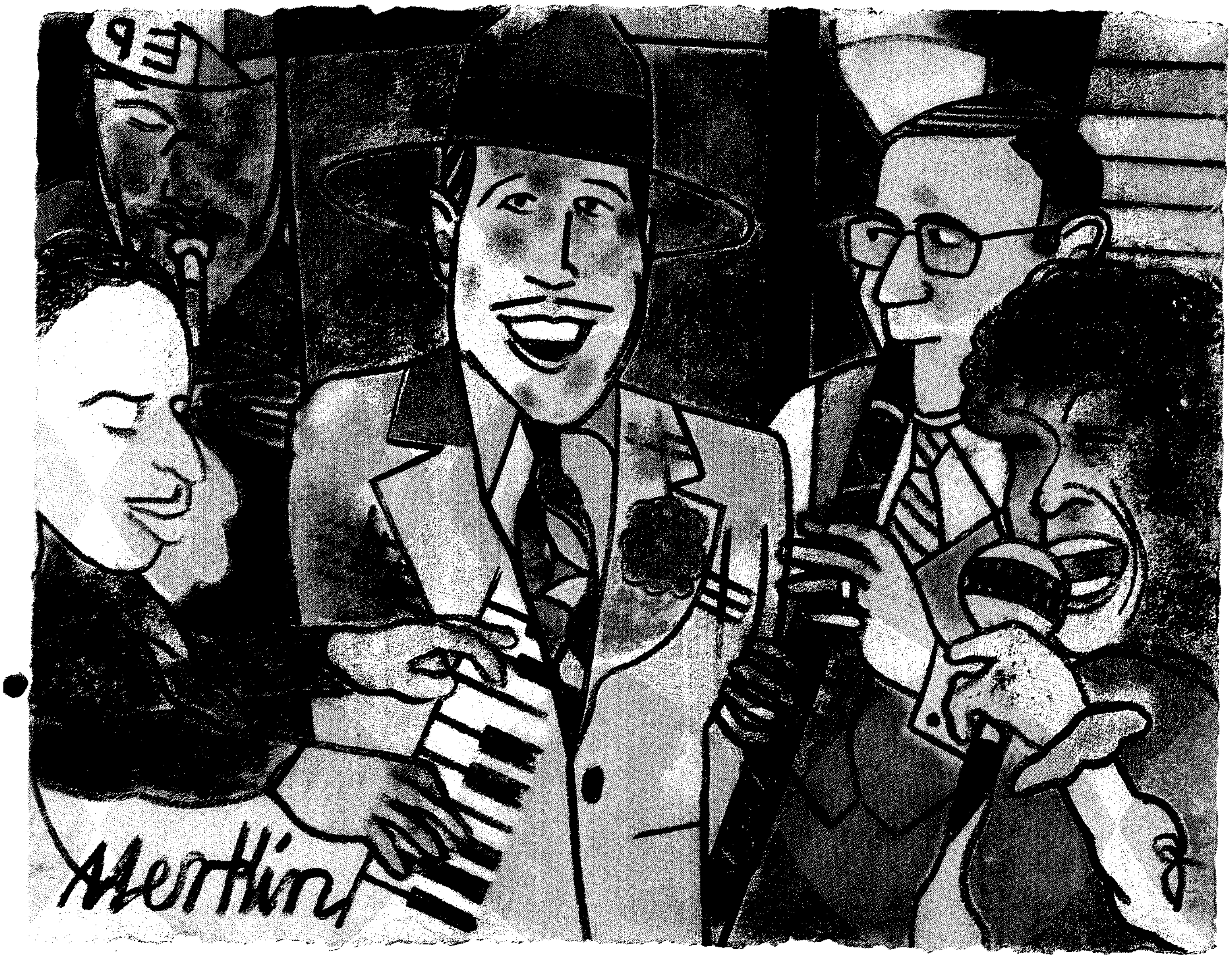
THIRTEEN years ago, a raunchy and politically exuberant hodgepodge of an exhibition called the Times Square Show was installed in a condemned former massage parlor near Forty-second Street and Seventh Avenue. That show, organized by the now disbanded group of artists known as Colab, is widely remembered as a blastoff point for the convulsively intense epoch that followed. In particular, it signalled a citywide art youthquake, and it marked the convergence of the sexually charged and polymorphous downtown scene, which had already spawned such phenomena as Keith Haring and Madonna, with uptown hip-hop culture. Now through October, on the marquees and in the storefronts and vacated peepshow arcades along both sides of Forty-second Street between Times Square and Eighth Avenue, we may behold its sober, conscientious descendant, the Forty-second Street Art Project.

The project consists of seventeen installations by Colab-era veterans such as Jenny Holzer and John Ahearn, as well as by professional designers like Todd Oldham, and the team of Tibor Kalman and Scott Stowell, whose keynote piece, "Everybody," a giant one-word billboard message with real chairs affixed to it, invites passersby to stop, sit, and ponder. This whole project, in fact, has an earnest classroom air. In 1980, all the artists were like delinquent students. Now the rebels have become the teachers. Thus Adelle Lutz's zany costumes instruct you to wear condoms, while Karen Finley's wall drawing, with its Blakean overtones, preaches a "Positive Attitude" about AIDS. Even a seemingly non-didactic installation by Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel, in which a gossamer-white audience of ghosts recedes into the mirror-encased lobby of the frayed Selwyn Theatre, has the genteel charm of a history lesson on Old New York.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Abstract Expressionism: Works on Paper, Selections from the Collection" begins with works from the mid-thirties and early forties, when the movement hadn't yet taken shape or been named, and it leaves off with a few eclectic pieces from the mid-sixties, when the style itself had already filtered down through three generations. Highlights include exquisite early drawings by Barnett Newman, surprisingly intense work by de Kooning, and paintings by William Baziotes that should revive his reputation as a colorist. Several lesser-known practitioners also flourish on paper, most notably Anne Ryan, Gerome Kamrowski, and Philip Guston. . . . ¶ Verrocchio's magnificent sculpture "Christ and St. Thomas," a recently restored Medici commission completed in 1483, is currently on loan from a granary-cum-oratory in Florence. Through Oct. 17. . . . ¶ An exhibition of historic hand-colored baseball cards. . . . ¶ Forty examples of Persian tiles, from the twelfth century through the late nineteenth, in a snug, one-room exhibit. Through Oct. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.) . . . **NOTE:** The roof garden, featuring six large sculptures, a great view, and cappuccino, is open when weather permits.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Latin-American Artists of the Twentieth Century" includes more than ninety artists, most notably Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973), a lively Cubo-Surrealist painter from Brazil, and Jesús Rafael Soto, the Venezuelan whose brilliant Op constructions, famous during the sixties, seem timely again. The younger generation, including Guillermo Kuitca and Julio Galán, is especially strong. Through Sept. 7. . . . ¶ "Pastime in Prints," very much a summer show, includes more than seventy depictions of leisure and outdoor activity by fifty artists, from Degas to Picasso to Hopper. Through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ "Multiple Images: Photographs Since 1965 from the Collection" features work by Jan Groover, Sol LeWitt, Duane Michals, and Charles Ray. Through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ Fifteen new large-



RICHARD MERKIN

"Jazz" at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

ART–Cont'd

scale linoleum-block prints by Chuck Close. Through Sept. 28. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum presents Rebecca Horn, a German artist whose work incorporates all manner of objects, from feathers to pistols to mercury—everything except old-fashioned paint and canvas. Among the many striking pieces here, the most ingenious is "Concert for Anarchy," a mechanized piano, hung upside down from the ceiling; the piano suddenly bursts open and then slowly retracts. . . . ¶ Two floors below but light-years apart, "Modern Masterpieces from the Permanent Collection," which includes paintings by Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Mondrian, Miró, and Picasso, is reassuring evidence that fine art still lives. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—More than seventy paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints by Paul Klee (1879-1940). Through Oct. 31. . . . ¶ "Singular Dimensions in Painting," an exhibit of minimalist work, primarily from the fifties and sixties. . . . ¶ A site-specific installation by Rebecca Horn. Through Oct. 1. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday through Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Hand-Painted Pop" includes early works by Rauschenberg, Johns, Warhol, and Rosenquist, and by such less well known artists as Jean Follett and Jess. Through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ "In the Spirit of Fluxus," a carefully thought-out and handsomely installed exhibition of art and incunabula by the far-flung practitioners of this international neo-Dada non-movement. Through Oct. 3. . . . ¶ "Hopper in Paris" consists of twenty-five works that Hopper painted in the early nineteen-hundreds. Through Oct. 3. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"The Hall of Human Biology and Evolution," a new permanent exhibition. . . . ¶ "Bears: Imagination and Reality." Through Oct. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"The Second Dimension: Twentieth-Century Sculptors' Drawings." More than seventy-five works from the museum's permanent collection, including figure drawings by Louise Nevelson and Isamu Noguchi. Through Sept. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—Organized as part of an ongoing Master Artist series, "Gertrud and Otto Natzler: Collaborations/Solitude" showcases the elegant contributions to twentieth-century ceramics of this husband-and-wife team. Through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ A retrospective exhibition of four decades of work by artist, inventor, and teacher Paul Soldner. Through Sept. 5. . . . ¶ "Edible Drawings" by John Cage. Experiments in handmade paper by the late composer. Through Oct. 10. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse—"Artists in the Marketplace" features thirty-five emerging New York artists. Through Sept. 12. . . . ¶ "Another Perspective: Selections from the Permanent Collection." Through Sept. 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office." This lighthearted exhibition examines the traditional link between "women's work" and home and office appliances. There are telling contraptions and vintage advertisements on display: classic telephones and washing machines in kitschy pastel colors; anthropomorphic ironing boards and eroticized toasters; impossibly sexist copy, such as a 1966 electric-mixer ad ("I love being whipped by my Dormeyer") and a 1962 Frigidaire ad that promises "A good washer is like a good man." Everything here was designed and marketed—by men, no doubt—with the unfulfilled American housewife and secretary in mind. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City—Works from every period of the sculptor's life (1904-1988) are installed in a garden and open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is at the core. The names of the stones alone are sensuous—jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine—and they rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art, like relics of civilization. (Open Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St.—"From the Inside Out" showcases eight contemporary international artists, including Christian Boltanski and Nancy Spero. . . . ¶ Prints, drawings, and other works on paper in "Collecting for the Twenty-first Century: Recent Acquisitions and Promised Gifts." Through Sept. 12. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesdays, 11 to 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway—"Home and the World: Architectural Sculpture by Aboudramane and Bodys Isek Kingelez." Aboudramane, who hails from the Ivory Coast but lives in Paris, creates bright-colored, often fantastical structures—one of his buildings has horns. Kingelez, who is from Zaire, combines urban African design with international architecture. Through Sept. 26. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 11 to 8. Closed Sept. 1-2.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Presents of the Past" showcases recent gifts to the museum, from Tiffany silver to a Puerto Rican painted crucifix. Through Oct. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"American Treasures." Nineteenth-century paintings from the museum's permanent collection. Through Sept. 29. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

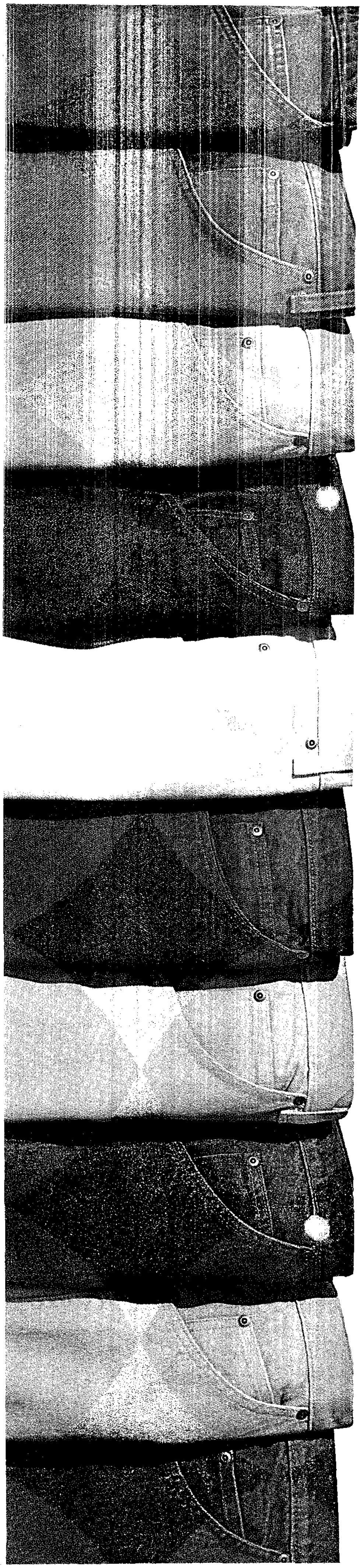
New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Dandies and Decadence: British Writers at the Turn of the Century" includes first editions, illustrations, and manuscripts from the library's Berg Collection. Through Sept. 25. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5:45.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—The library devotes its entire space to "Jazz," featuring more than four hundred original scores and arrangements, rare manuscripts, film footage, photographs from the forties to the sixties, and radio broadcasts from the thirties. Through Sept. 30. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8; Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, noon to 6. Closed Sept. 4 and Labor Day.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Ante América" ("Regarding America") features work in mixed mediums by more than twenty African, Caribbean, and Native American artists. Through Sept. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

OTHER VENUES

"Botero in New York"—After a highly touted airing on the Champs-Élysées and a blockbuster show, doubly outrageous for its venue,



Our blue jeans come in some pretty funny shades of blue.

Around our house, we grew up believing that "blue jeans" was one word ("bluejeans"), because blue was the only color jeans ever came in.

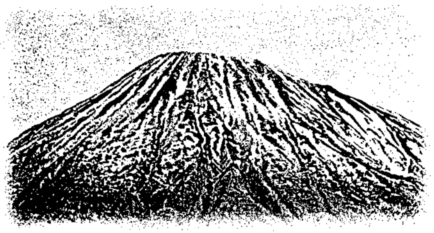
Even today, that's mainly what you find at the Mall: lots of jeans in indigo blue. Maybe some in black, maybe a few in natural – but not much else.

Well, at Lands' End we see no reason why jeans should lead so colorless an existence. So, we make our Square Rigger® jeans in *ten* delicious colors. (As a matter of fact, some seasons we also offer Overdyed Denims in five other colors.)

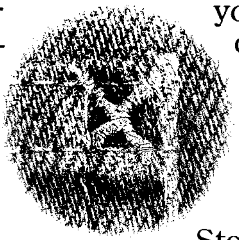
The local Mall probably can't come close to our selection. For that matter, we don't know many stores *anywhere* that can.

Stonewashed – with volcanic stone. (Isn't that a blast?)

Of course, we don't expect our Square Rigger jeans to make their way in the world on good looks alone.



So, we put them through a lot before they reach you. A good bath, for one thing: a vigorous washing where we tumble them over soft volcanic rock.



It gently "ages" the denim fabric. It makes our jeans – brand-new – feel as easy and comfortable as old friends. And it gives them a nice worn look.

Now, we know there are other prewashed jeans. But here's the difference: they're usually washed in *harsh acid.* It wears down the fabric by literally destroying a little of it. (Sometimes, more than a little: acid doesn't always know when to stop.)

Our hearty 14 3/4 oz. cotton denim comes out of the stonewashing looking nicely lived-in. And none the worse for wear.

Our 8 won't turn into a 6.

Lest you think the washing is merely cosmetic, we should point out it has a practical side, too.

Soaking our jeans preshrinks them. So, when you order, let's say, a Women's 8 or a Men's 34, you get exactly that. And it *stays* your size, wash after wash.

Like everything at Lands' End, we want our jeans to be at the head of their class. So, we fuss and fret over the teeniest details.

We make the pockets deeper, so your change won't fall out when you're sitting. We use sturdy, double-stitching on the seams, and rustproof rivets at critical stress points. (Incidentally, there are no rivets on the back pockets: we'd worry about tearing your chairs. Instead of rivets, we use tough x-stitching there.)

Our price is preshrunk, too.

Believe it or not, our Stonewashed Jeans are only $30. Which you *would* believe, if you got our Lands' End catalog regularly.

It's full of exceptional values – from Oxford button-down shirts to women's tailored separates, from our original soft luggage to kids' clothes and home furnishings.

And everything comes with our absolute, no-questions-asked guarantee.

If you haven't had the fun of shopping Lands' End, phone for our latest catalog. Call 24 hours a day, any day. Or send the coupon below.

Millions of people shop at our "store." May we show you a pair of jeans?

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ART—Cont'd

at the Palais des Papes, in Avignon, Fernando Botero's gargantuan bronze figures will take over the Park Avenue Mall from 54th to 61st Sts. The Apple may gain a little more polish from the alfresco exhibition, but local residents are worried that it will have cars caroming off curbs. Opens Sept. 7. Through Nov. 14. (An exhibition of Botero's monumental sculptures and drawings on canvas opens Sept. 14 at Marlborough.)

Red Grooms—Sculptural interpretations of some of New York's most famous icons. Visitors can walk into a subway car complete with a spring-mounted floor; sit in the back of an oversized cab that has large video screens of animated traffic on three sides; and climb to the top of the World Trade Center for a breathtaking view of the real star of the show, the majestic, newly renovated Main Waiting Room. Grooms has been working on a new addition: a 1949 Cadillac fastback coupé. Through Oct. 11. (Grand Central Terminal. Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 7; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

IBM Gallery of Science and Art—"Vassar College Art Collection." Highlights from the collection of one of the best art-history departments in the country include a massive Egyptian head carved in red granite; a Han dynasty earthenware tower; a pair of Florentine canvases depicting the adventures of Ulysses; a van Cleve portrait of a man; a Hubert Robert of the Octavian Gate; several small Hudson River School canvases, including a sublime painting by Inness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death; Paris scenes by both Robert Henri and Edvard Munch; a Florine Stettheimer of bathing maidens; a Mark Rothko multiform; and Marsden Hartley's masterpiece "Indian Composition," of 1914. Vassar's is a teaching collection, especially rich in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "style of" paintings. The school's new museum, nearing completion in Poughkeepsie, will be the best place between Manhattan and Buffalo to wander through the breadth of art history.... ¶ "Twentieth-Century Works from the University of Iowa Museum of Art." This school collection, on the other hand, seems more like a dumping ground for tax write-offs. Exceptions include an impressive group of German Expressionist paintings, among them an early Lyonel Feininger and a rare Adolf Erbslöh (he was the only American to work with the members of Der Blaue Reiter); a fine Stuart Davis; a Grant Wood painting of a boy in a plaid sweater; and a very good late Ben Nicholson inspired by a visit to Karnac. Through Sept. 11. (590 Madison Ave., at 56th St. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

"Monumental Propaganda"—Self-styled instigators Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid have invited an international cast of a hundred and fifty artists to envision the future of Soviet monuments. Their drawings, sketches, photographs, and written proposals are nearly as surreal as the events that made these ideas possible. Through Oct. 3. (Courtyard Gallery, World Financial Center, Battery Park City.)

Pastoral Mirage—Brooklyn's Prospect Park is both the subject and the site of an installation by the sculptor David Schafer. His fourteen neon-yellow billboards, mounted on posts around the park, feature excerpts from the writings of Frederick Law Olmsted, the park's designer. The text of each piece reflects upon the vista it disturbs. Inside the park's edge, near Grand Army Plaza, for example, a portion of sign No. 5 reads, "At a short distance from the principal entrance, the course of the walks is designed to invite dispersion ... and to aid in inducing a feeling of security and of freedom from the hurry, bustling and watchfulness necessary to safety while walking in the streets of the city." Other signs present Olmsted's meditations on park-design concepts such as spectacle, comfort, and boscage.

Sculpture Center at Roosevelt Island—Six site-specific works placed around a Roosevelt Island transportation terminus. Karin Giusti's "Motorgate/Metaphysics" is a gigantic charm bracelet—pink rabbit's foot, golden wishbone, dice, etc.—strung along the top level of the ramp garage. Susan Crowder's modest, plaintive "Blackwell's," nestled in a niche in a covered plaza, is a sort of fortified skep—a small Monet haystack with a miniature barbed-wire fence around the opening in the top. Lisa Hein's "Last Roundup/Planner's Folly" is a circle of colorful twisted bicycle frames suspended over—and mocking—the complex's bike rack, which is so isolated as to suit nobody but a bicycle thief. There are additional works by Simon Lee, Andy Yoder, and Kendall Buster. (Motorgate, Roosevelt Island.)

STEVEN GUARNACCIA

Socrates Sculpture Park—The work of fifty New York artists is on display in the biggest show ever at this riverfront lot in Long Island City, approximately across the East River from Gracie Mansion. The work ranges from sinister (Itty Neuhaus's black net draped over street lights) and sly (Gregg LeFevre's gourds hanging in a tree) to funny (Kurt Novak's giant pink mama kangaroo) and fragrant (Antoinette Ayres' ten-foot-high beehive tomb). The structural-steel sculptures of the park's founder, Mark di Suvero, anchor it all against the Manhattan skyline. (Vernon Boulevard at Broadway.)

Storm King Art Center—The center this year celebrates the acquisition of Siah Armajani's "Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini." Visitors can perch on the huge steel sculpture's open bridge, overlooking a gully, or gaze out at the hills from two cell-like gazebos. Massive abstract steel sculptures by Menashe Kadishman, Mark di Suvero, and Richard Serra, among others, dominate the four hundred acres of woods, hills, and gardens. Isamu Noguchi's brilliant "Momo Taro," forty tons of granite perfectly placed on the grassy cap of a smooth hill, is reason enough to visit. (Mountainville, New York. 1-914 534-3115. Open daily, 11 to 5:30.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Into the Street

As anyone who has ever participated in a protest march knows, photographs that capture the full range of these actions are rare. "March on Washington—1963," organized by the Black Star photographic agency, offers documentary pictures that go beyond the usual crowd shots to express what it was all about and bring back a momentous day. The event was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, on August 28, 1963. The images are by Declan Haun, Ivan Massar, Dan McCoy, and Fred Ward, and they will no doubt be jogging memories as well as providing fresh lessons. While none of the photographs is a tour de force like Alfred Stieglitz's American classic "Steerage," these shots are moving, and they tell us about the hope and the struggles that are a fundamental part of our heritage.

This show has another thing going for it: it takes advantage of Manhattan's street life. Until September 6th, these photographs will be on display in the windows of nine establishments on Fifth Avenue between Fifteenth and Twenty-first Streets. (A similar exhibition is being held concurrently at the Photographic Resource Center in Boston; Motel Fine Arts on Spring Street has a number of related images in its windows.)

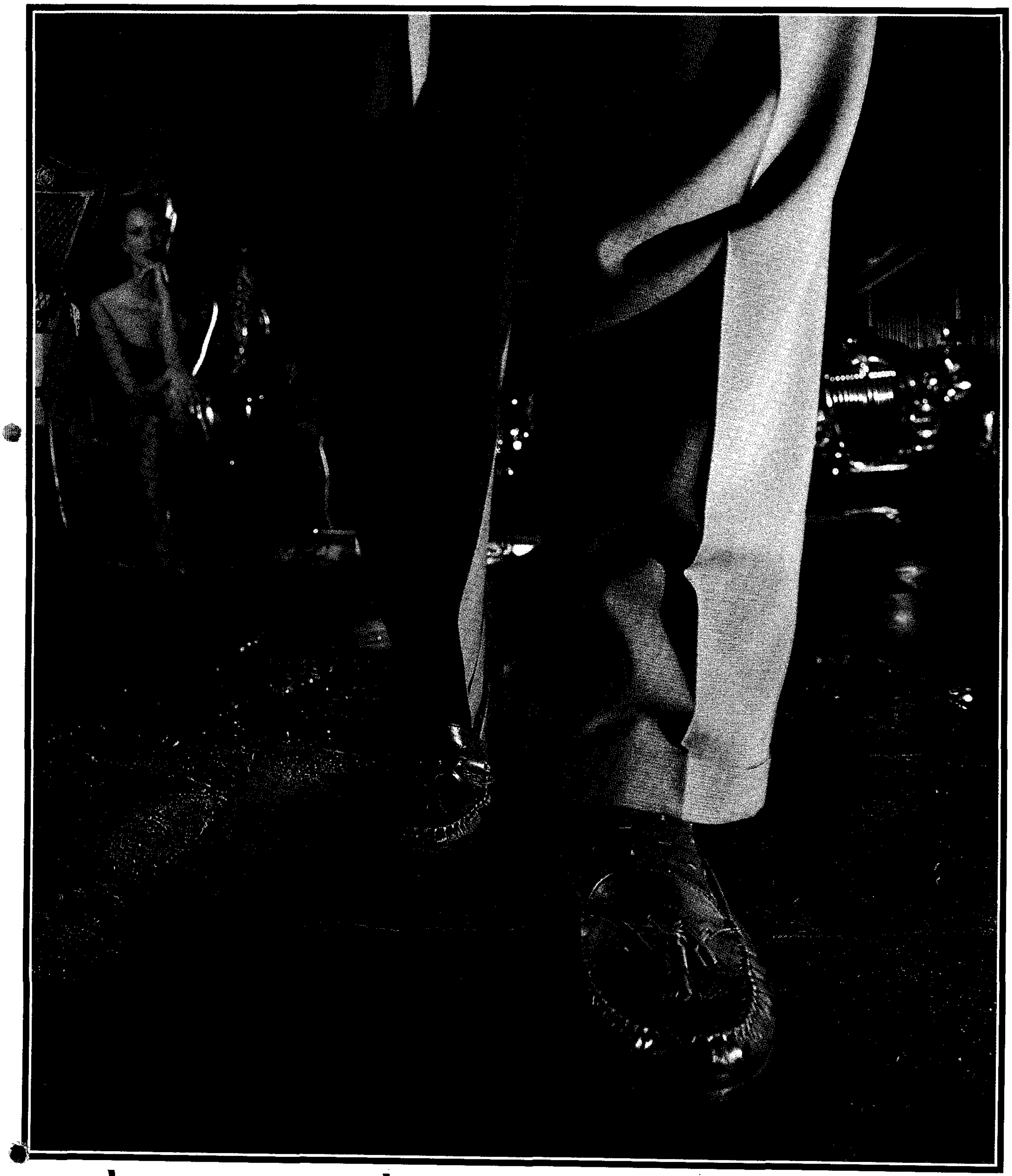
Ansel Adams—In addition to his classic vistas, this exhibit also includes work that serves as a reminder of Adams' ability to take great portraits, casual shots, and the occasional modernist abstraction. Through Sept. 11. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

Margaret Morton—Morton's black-and-white photographs of shanties in New York capture the architectural resourcefulness of the men and women who built them. In her pictures, rubble and discarded wood can be as powerful as marble. Through Sept. 4. (Lowinsky, 575 Broadway.)

Minayoshi Takada—Twenty-six lushly textured vintage prints from 1947 to 1950. Through Sept. 10. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Outside the Dream: Child Poverty in America." Seventy black-and-white works by photojournalist Stephen Shames. Through Sept. 26.... ¶ Collaborative Polaroids by artists and teen-agers from New York City. Through Sept. 26. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—Opening-night, backstage, and production shots since 1893, celebrating Broadway's hundredth anniversary. Playwrights, stars, and composers include Tennessee Williams, Al Jolson, Fred Astaire, and George Gershwin. Through Oct. 3.... ¶ "From Alice to Ocean," fifty photographs by Rick Smolan, accompanied by advanced interactive digital technology displays that document a journey through the Australian outback. Through Oct. 3. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)



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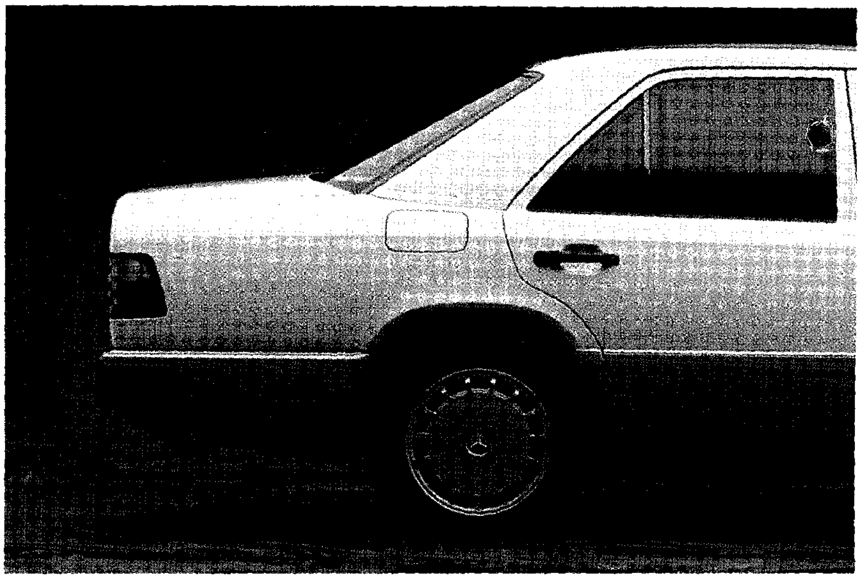

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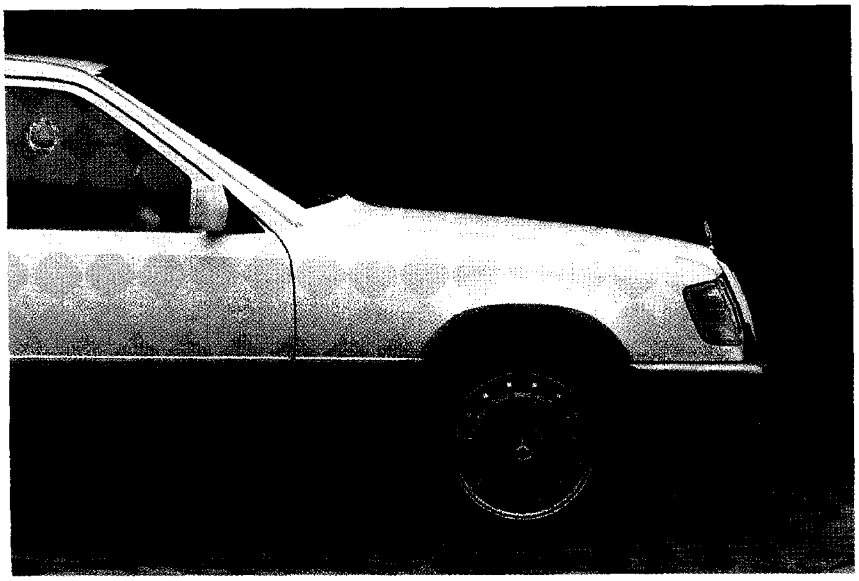
*AMCI Review '93 Safety Features Standard on all Mercedes. **Automobile Magazine, March, 1993. Air bags are supplemental restraints. Please always wear your seat belt

rather drive?

merely a piece of one.



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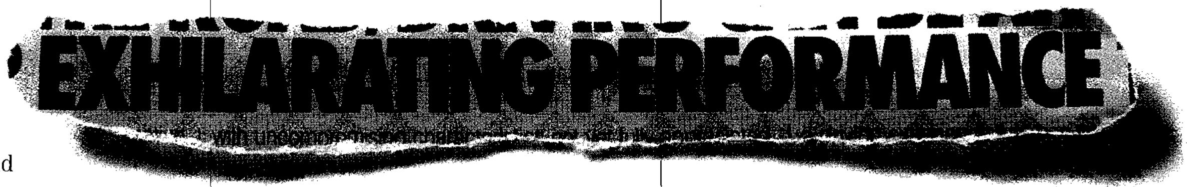

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MUSIC

Audience Oath

To be repeated by all who anticipate attending a concert during the upcoming season:

—I will remember that music is an ephemeral soundscape superimposed on a background of silence, and that its existence is fragile.

—I will not speak while music is being performed publicly, unless to request an ambulance.

—I will not bring cellophane-wrapped candies into a concert hall. If I do, I will not unwrap them while music is being played. If I find myself possessed of a coughing fit, I will find an exit.

—If I arrive after the music has begun, I will stand in the back of the hall until the piece has ended. If I can attain my assigned seat without disturbing any other listener, I will not enter into conversation once I reach it.

—I will not shuffle papers, flip audibly through my program, or squirm. If I am bored, I will leave unobtrusively to spend my time in more amenable pursuits, rather than interfere with the pleasure of others.

—If I possess a wristwatch that beeps, I will leave it at home with my hard candies. If I use a hearing aid, I will ask my neighbor to alert me if it should suddenly emit a shriek.

—I will not clap unless I am absolutely certain that a piece is over.

—I will not sprint up the aisle the instant the last piece ends. If I must exit without applauding the soloist, I will wait until he leaves the stage, sparing him the insult of seeing his efforts rewarded with a view of my backside.

IN TOWN—OPERA

"Farewell to My Concubine"—A traditional Chinese opera with a plot dating from the late Ch'in dynasty, featuring Alan Chow in the transvestite role of Lady Yu, the self-sacrificing consort of the doomed King of Ch'u. (Confucius Plaza Auditorium, 40 Division St. Sept. 2 at 4. No tickets necessary.)

IN TOWN—RECITALS

Bargemusic—Edward Auer performs Stravinsky's A-Major Serenade for Piano; cellist Sung-Won Yang joins him for Beethoven's A-Major Cello Sonata (Op. 69); and violinist Christiaan Bor completes the ensemble for Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Sept. 2 at 7:30 and Sept. 5 at 4.)

Sarabande—A Renaissance ensemble, performing works from Elizabethan England. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. Sept. 5 at 11:30 A.M. No tickets necessary, but seats may be reserved by calling 1-718 885-2478.)

Teatime Tunes—A salon concert that includes music by Saint-Saëns (performed by cellist Iris Regev and pianist Barry Mott) and folkloric music played by El Dorado (a Venezuelan trio). (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Sept. 5 at 6. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 876-6000.) . . . **NOTE:** Harpist Park Stickney plucks and pedals here on weekday afternoons, from 5 to 6, to accompany the sipping of tea and sherry.

OUT OF TOWN

Caramoor Music Festival—In the final concert of the festival's season, soprano Sylvia McNair and pianist André Previn collaborate in songs by Jerome Kern. A benefit concert, performed "supper-club style," in Caramoor's Spanish Courtyard. (Katonah, N.Y. 1-914 232-1252. Sept. 4 at 5:30.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Sade—The Nigerian-born cocktail singer and etherealist Sade is both worshipped and dismissed for her stylized musical stance. Her cool, muted, unemphatic delivery of melodic, samba-tinged light jazz never gets very intense or emotional, but, like Bryan Ferry's tortured jet-set persona, it's as sensuous and appealing as good Art Deco. The mood for Sade's floating world will be established by her opening act, the wonderful jazz-meets-hip-hop trio Digable Planets, whose début album, "Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space)," ought to be on every hipster's boom box this summer. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Sept. 3 at 8.)

Aerosmith—Initially dismissed as derivative, Aerosmith now enjoys the sort of acclaim in this country that Jerry Lewis is accorded in France. Arguably America's preëminent rock band, Aerosmith is currently at the pinnacle of a twenty-year career, and the band's perseverance was recently rewarded with a new seven-figure record deal, which should keep the boys busy well into the next century, when swivel-hipped, balloon-lipped singer Steven Tyler will be fifty-something. Not to worry. With a classic back catalogue that sounds better every year (any grunge outfit that's worth its salt has a copy of "Toys in the Attic" on the tour bus), Aerosmith will probably swagger on forever. With 4 Non Blondes. (Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 4-5 at 8.)

Paquito D'Rivera Quintet—Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9500. Sept. 2 at 7 and 9.

Oak Ridge Boys—Westbury Music Fair. 1-516 334-0800. Sept. 2 at 8.

Salsa Festival—Oscar D'León, Joe Arroyo, Los Hermanos Rosario, Tito Nieves, Marc Anthony, La Sonora Ponceña, and the Eddie Torres Dancers. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Sept. 4 at 8.)

Artie Shaw Orchestra—Directed by Dick Johnson. (South Street Seaport, Pier 16, East River at Fulton St. Sept. 6 at 5. No tickets necessary.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Chicago White Sox, Sept. 1-2 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Cleveland Indians, Sept. 3 at 7:30 and Sept. 4-5 at 1:30.

Mets—Vs. the Houston Astros, Sept. 1 at 1:40.

Hike!—It's time again for professional football. For the Jets, 1992 was a year to forget: they finished 4–12. This year, however, the Jets have acquired a few veterans to stir things up, including defensive all-stars Ronnie Lott and Leonard Marshall, and East Islip's own Boomer Esiason. The Jets begin their season on Sept. 5 at 1, against the Denver Broncos. The Giants didn't fare too well last year either: they finished 6–10. But new coach Dan Reeves, known for his disciplinary skills, can be expected to crack the whip. The Giants' home opener is on Sept. 12 at 1, versus the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 1-718 293-6000; the Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; and the Jets and the Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111.)

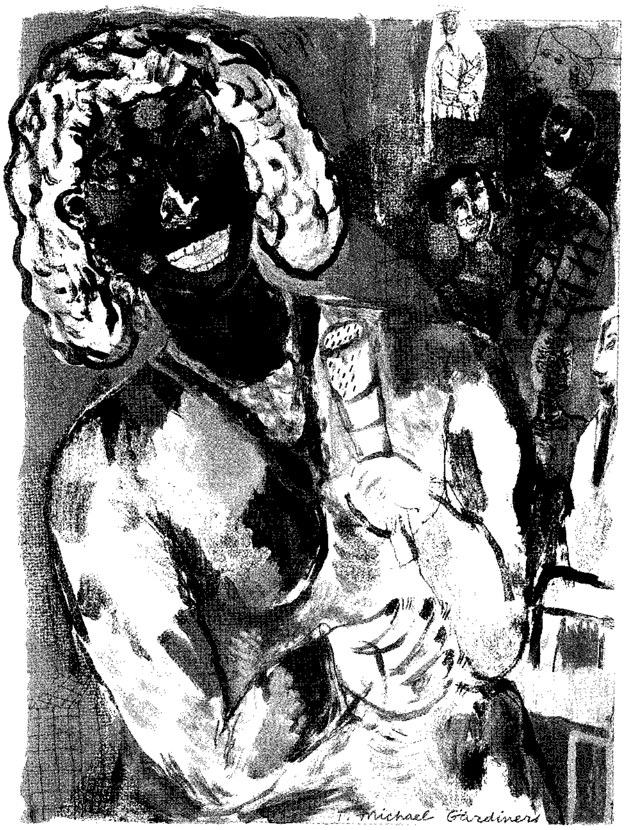
CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS

U.S. Open—The world's finest players take over the courts at the U.S.T.A. National Tennis Center, in Flushing Meadow, through Sept. 12. (1-718 271-5100.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Time Travel—Once upon a time, many years ago, Ebbets Field was covered with oak trees and Coney Island produced prickly pears. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's exhibit "Roots: Brooklyn Botanical Melting Pot" offers an idea of the types of plant life that grew here when Verrazano sailed over. (Steinhardt Conservatory, 1000 Washington Ave., near Grand Army Plaza. Opens Sept. 4. Through Sept. 26. Daily, except Mondays, from 10 to 5.)

Workers Unite—Here are a few ways to celebrate Labor Day. Sept. 5 at 9: Fireworks at the South Street Seaport. The Grucci gold split-comet shell will saturate the sky during the last minute of Johnny Mathis's "Wonderful, Wonderful," broadcast simultaneously on WQEW AM 1560. . . . ¶ Sept. 6 at 11 A.M.: Labor Day Parade Grand Marshal Lane Kirkland, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., will lead a parade of more than five hundred thousand union workers up Fifth Ave. from 44th St. to 72nd St. and then east to Third Ave. . . . ¶ Sept. 6 at 1: Big Onion Walking Tours will focus on the influence of immigrants and the labor movement on the growth of New York City. For more information, call 439-1090.



Gloria Gaynor at the World Financial Center.

T. MICHAEL GARDINER

Lionizing Lionel—The N.A.A.C.P.'s Mid-Manhattan Branch is sponsoring the West Side Arts, Crafts, and Antiques Festival on Sept. 4, from 11 to 6. At 2, jazz musician, composer, and bandleader Lionel Hampton will receive the Roy Wilkins Memorial Award for his half century of work on behalf of civil rights. The festival also includes food stalls from fifteen countries; jazz, blues, and gospel performances; and exhibits of macramé and wood carving. (West End Ave. from 86th to 96th Sts. The main stage is at 96th St.)

Wigging Out—Well, Miss Thing, don your wig and platform shoes, and hustle over to Tompkins Square Park (Avenue A at 7th St.). We're talking about Wigstock, a kind of Woodstock for the drag set (Sept. 6, from noon to 8). The Boybar Beauties and Lypsinka, among other cross-dressers, will perform; the effervescent Lady Bunny will keep things rolling. You haven't got a thing to wear? Sure you do. Suggested dress ranges from psychedelic housewife to Medusa. And *everyone's* on the list—no tickets required.

Oba Oba!—In recognition of Brazilian Independence Day, Little Brazil (46th St. between Sixth and Madison Aves.) will be closed off on Sept. 5, from 10 to 7. Pop singer Elba Ramalho will provide some of the daylong musical entertainment.

Three Chinese Shows—As part of the annual Chinatown Summer Cultural Festival, the Chinese-American Arts Council will present three free shows of traditional Asian performing arts. Sept. 2 at 4: The opera "Farewell to My Conqueror." (Confucius Plaza Auditorium, 40 Division St.) . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 2: A variety show featuring traditional and folk music and dance, plus martial arts. (Eighth Ave. between 53rd and 54th Sts., Brooklyn.) . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 4: A Chinatown variety show concludes the festival. (Columbus Park, Mulberry and Bayard Sts.)

Gloria Gaynor—The disco diva who gave us "I Will Survive," one of the camp anthems of the late seventies, is back, and on Sept. 1, from 7 to 9, she will provide some tunes to help her public celebrate the days of wide lapels and chest-nesting chains; with Tavares, whose "More than a Woman" was on the soundtrack of "Saturday Night Fever." A free Dancing on the Plaza event. (World Financial Center, Battery Park City.)

Doin' Diz—The Jazzmobile will present Jon Faddis, as well as a handful of other trumpeters, in a tribute to Dizzy Gillespie, on Sept. 1, from 7 to 9. Booths with African-American food and crafts will be set up. (Grant's Tomb, Riverside Dr. at 122nd St. No tickets necessary.)

Postmodern Proscenium—Rakka-Thamm! theatre company takes over the W. 10th St. pier for a production of Julie Bovasso's "Down by the River Where Waterlilies Are Disfigured Every Day." (Sept. 2-5 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Gorilla Rep will extend its production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," presented in the southwest corner of Washington Square Park. (Sept. 4-5 at 8. Through Sept. 12. No tickets necessary.)

Readings—Sept. 7 at 7: Caleb Carr will read from his new novel, "The Alienist," in which Teddy Roosevelt, as chief of police in New York City, unravels a serial murder. (Limbo, 47 Avenue A. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 7 at 9:30: Gillian McCain, Edwin Torres, and others will read from their journals. (Fez at Time Café, 380 Lafayette St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

Tours & Walks—Sept. 2 at 6 A.M.: The South Street Seaport Museum people will take visitors behind the scenes at the Fulton Fish Market. For more information, call 669-9416. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 7:45 A.M.: The New York Hall of Science will sponsor a trip to the stables at Belmont Park. For more information, call 1-718 699-0005. . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at noon: Adventure on a Shoestring will guide visitors around the area known as Paddy's Market—Ninth Ave. between 34th and 42nd Sts. (For more information, call 265-2663.) . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 1: Lower Manhattan as seen through the eyes of two mystery writers who publish under the name Maan Meyers. For more information, call 397-3809.

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MOSCHINO

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

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5	6	7				

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 27.

KALIFORNIA

Opening September 3, Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis in "Kalifornia."

DAVE MCKEAN

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)

Theatre 1: "Amongst Friends" (directed by Rob Weiss).

Theatre 2: "Much Ado About Nothing" (Kenneth Branagh).

Theatre 3: "Orlando" (Sally Potter).

Theatre 4: "Especially on Sunday" (Marco Tullio Giordana, Giuseppe Bertolucci, and Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).

Theatre 5: "Like Water for Chocolate" (†).

Theatre 6: "The Wedding Banquet" (†).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†).

Theatre 2: "Only the Strong" (Sheldon Lettich).

Theatre 3: "The Secret Garden" (†).

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)

Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (†).

Theatre 2: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (Steven Zaillian).

Theatre 3: "The Firm" (†).

Theatre 4: Through Sept. 2: "The Fugitive" (†). From Sept. 3: "Boxing Helena" (Jennifer Lynch).

Theatre 5: "In the Line of Fire" (†).

Theatre 6: "The Man Without a Face" (Mel Gibson), with Gibson.

Theatre 7: "Wilder Napalm" (Glenn Gordon Caron).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)

"Careful" (Guy Maddin).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)

Theatre 1: "Un Coeur en Hiver" (Claude Sautet, in French).

Theatre 2: "The Last Party" (Mark Benjamin and Marc Levin).

Theatre 3: "Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me" (Joel Hershman); and "Being at Home with Claude" (Jean Boudin; in French).

Theatre 4: Through Sept. 2: (Matinées only) "Surf Ninjas" (Neal Israel); and (evenings only) "Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday" (Adam Marcus). From Sept. 3: "Kalifornia" (Dominic Sena), with Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis.

Theatre 5: (Matinées only) "112th & Central: Through the Eyes of the Children," a documentary; and (evenings only) "Boys' Shorts: The New Queer Cinema," a program of six short films.

Theatre 6: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.

Theatre 7: "The Ballad of Little Jo" (Maggie Greenwald), with Suzy Amis.

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)

Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (†).

Theatre 2: "Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston), with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow.

Theatre 3: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†).

Theatre 4: "The Firm" (†).

Theatre 5: Through Sept. 2: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†). From Sept. 3: "Kalifornia" (Dominic Sena), with Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis.

Theatre 6: "The Fugitive" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"In the Line of Fire" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)

Theatre 1: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).

Theatre 2: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.

Theatre 3: "Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston), with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow.

Theatre 4: Through Sept. 2: "Needful Things." From Sept. 3: "Boxing Helena" (Jennifer Lynch).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: Through Sept. 2: "Coneheads" (Steve Barron). From Sept. 3: "Kalifornia" (Dominic Sena), with Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis.

Theatre 2: "The Firm" (†).

Theatre 3: "The Fugitive" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

"Hard Target" (†).

Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)

"Like Water for Chocolate" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

Theatre 1: Through Sept. 2: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (Mel Brooks). From Sept. 3: "The Seventh Coin" (Dror Soref).

Theatre 2: "The Firm" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

Through Sept. 2: "El Cid" (1961, Anthony Mann). From Sept. 3: To be announced.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

"Much Ado About Nothing" (Kenneth Branagh).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: "Hard Target" (†).

Theatre 2: "Hard Target" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)

"Only the Strong" (Sheldon Lettich).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).

Theatre 2: "Rising Sun" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)

Theatre 1: Through Sept. 2: "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer). From Sept. 3: "Boxing Helena" (Jennifer Lynch).

Theatre 2: "House of Angels" (†).

Theatre 3: "Betty" (Claude Chabrol; in French).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)

To be announced.

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)

Theatre 1: "Jurassic Park" (†).

Theatre 2: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.

Theatre 3: "The Wedding Banquet" (†).

Theatre 4: "Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston), with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow.

Theatre 5: "Heart and Souls" (Ron Underwood).

Theatre 6: "The Secret Garden" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Sept. 2: "The Fugitive" (†). From Sept. 3: "Kalifornia" (Dominic Sena), with Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

"Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: "In the Line of Fire" (†).

Theatre 2: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (Steven Zaillian).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

"The Ballad of Little Jo" (Maggie Greenwald).

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

"The Man Without a Face" (Mel Gibson).

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

Through Sept. 2: "The Firm" (†).

From Sept. 3: "Boxing Helena" (Jennifer Lynch).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)

Theatre 1: "Hard Target" (†).

Theatre 2: "In the Line of Fire" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)

Theatre 1: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Man Without a Face" (Mel Gibson), with Gibson.

Theatre 3: "Rising Sun" (†).

Theatre 4: "The Fugitive" (†).

Theatre 5: (Matinées only) "The Secret Garden" (†); and (evenings only) "The Fugitive" (†).

Theatre 6: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†).

Theatre 7: "Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston), with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)

Theatre 1: "Only the Strong" (Sheldon Lettich).

Theatre 2: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Theatre 1: "Once Upon a Time in China Part 2" (directed by Tsui Hark; in Cantonese, with Chinese and English subtitles).

Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.

Theatre 3: (Separate admissions) "Stepping Razor-Red X" (Nicholas Campbell), a documentary; and "Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives" (Aer[illegible] Weissman and Lynne Fernie).

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "Jurassic Park" (†).

Theatre 2: "Hard Target" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: "Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston), with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow.

Theatre 2: "Rising Sun" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: Through Sept. 2: "Tokyo Decadence" (Ryu Murakami). From Sept. 3: "Bad Behavior" (Les Blair).

Theatre 2: "The Killer" (1989, John Woo).

Theatre 3: "La Vie de Bohème" (†).

Theatre 4: "Strictly Ballroom" (Baz Luhrmann).

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "The Man Without a Face" (Mel Gibson), with Gibson.
Theatre 2: "Jurassic Park" (†).
Theatre 3: "Hard Target" (†).
Theatre 4: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 5: "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 6: "Heart and Souls" (Ron Underwood), with Robert Downey, Jr.
Theatre 7: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.
Theatre 8: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (Mel Brooks), with Cary Elwes.
Theatre 9: "The Secret Garden" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Only the Strong" (Sheldon Lettich).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer); and (evenings only) "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend).
Theatre 3: "What's Love Got to Do with It" (Brian Gibson).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"In the Line of Fire" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Ballroom" (Baz Luhrmann).
Theatre 2: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (Mel Brooks), with Cary Elwes.
Theatre 3: "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937); and "Poetic Justice" (John Singleton), with Janet Jackson.
Theatre 4: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).
Theatre 5: "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer).
Theatre 6: "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman), an animated film; and "Menace II Society" (Allen and Albert Hughes).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Jurassic Park" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Especially on Sunday" (Marco Tullio Giordana, Giuseppe Bertolucci, and Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Ballad of Little Jo" (Maggie Greenwald).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Like Water for Chocolate" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 2: "Road Scholar" (Roger Weisberg). From Sept. 3: "Bad Behavior" (Les Blair)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th. (586-1900)
"Tokyo Decadence" (Ryu Murakami).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"King of the Hill" (Steven Soderbergh).

"MINING'S JUST LIKE CHOPPING FIREWOOD."

At the Cinema Village, Guy Maddin's "Careful."

COURTESY OF ZEITGEIST FILMS

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (Mel Brooks).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"The Man Without a Face" (Mel Gibson).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"In the Line of Fire" (†).

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Much Ado About Nothing" (Kenneth Branagh).
Theatre 2: "Orlando" (Sally Potter).
Theatre 3: "The Wedding Banquet" (†).
Theatre 4: "Tito and Me" (†).
Theatre 5: "Guelwaar" (Ousmane Sembène; in French and Wolof).
Theatre 6: "Un Coeur en Hiver" (Claude Sautet, in French).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Rising Sun" (†).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 2: "Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston), with Ed Harris and Max von Sydow. From Sept. 3: "Boxing Helena" (Jennifer Lynch).
Theatre 2: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 3: "Manhattan Murder Mystery" (†).
Theatre 4: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (Steven Zaillian).
Theatre 5: "The Firm" (†).
Theatre 6: (Matinées only) "The Secret Garden" (†); and (evenings only) "The Fugitive" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.
Theatre 2: "Heart and Souls" (Ron Underwood), with Robert Downey, Jr.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Hard Target" (†).
Theatre 2: "Only the Strong" (Sheldon Lettich).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "The Meteor Man" (directed by Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 2: "Surf Ninjas" (Neal Israel). From Sept. 3: "Kalifornia" (Dominic Sena) with Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis.
Theatre 3: "Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday" (Adam Marcus).
Theatre 4: "Son of the Pink Panther" (Blake Edwards), with Roberto Benigni.
Theatre 5: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 6: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Sept. 2: "Rising Sun" (†). From Sept. 3: "Boxing Helena" (Jennifer Lynch).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"The Firm" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 2: "Coneheads" (Steve Barron).
Theatre 3: "What's Love Got to Do with It" (Brian Gibson).

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Needful Things" (Fraser C. Heston).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Hard Target" (†).
Theatre 2: "Only the Strong" (Sheldon Lettich).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Sept. 1: "Margin for Error" (1943, directed by Otto Preminger); and "They Got Me Covered" (1943, David Butler).
Sept. 2-5: "Laura" (1944, Otto Preminger), with Gene Tierney, Clifton Webb, and Dana Andrews; and "Angel Face" (1953, Preminger), with Robert Mitchum and Jean Simmons.
Sept. 6-7: "Skidoo" (1969, Otto Preminger), with Jackie Gleason and Carol Channing; and "Such Good Friends" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Sept. 4: "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966, Mike Nichols), with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, George Segal, and Sandy Dennis; and "Reflections in a Golden Eye" (see page 27).
From Sept. 5: "Giant" (1956, George Stevens), with Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and James Dean.

Thalia, B'way at 95th. (316-4962)
Through Sept. 2: "Captain Blood" (1935, Michael Curtiz), with Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, and Basil Rathbone; and "The Sea Hawk" (1940, Curtiz), with Flynn.
Sept. 3-6: "Silkwood" (†); and "Norma Rae" (1979, Martin Ritt), with Sally Field.
Sept. 7: "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" (1953, Jacques Tati; in French) and "Mon Oncle" (1958, Tati; in French), both with Tati.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Sept. 1: "Wise Blood" (1979, John Huston), with Brad Dourif; and "The Dead" (1987, Huston).
Sept. 2: "North by Northwest" (1959, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant; and "I Confess" (1953, Hitchcock), with Montgomery Clift.
Sept. 3-4: "Diva" (1981, Jean-Jacques Beineix; in French); and "King of Hearts" (1967, Philippe de Broca; in French and English).
Sept. 5: "The Rose Tattoo" (1955, Daniel Mann), with Anna Magnani and Burt Lancaster; and "The Fugitive Kind" (1960, Sidney Lumet), with Marlon Brando.
Sept. 6: "Jean de Florette" (1985, Claude Berri; in French); and "Manon of the Spring" (1987, Berri; in French).
Sept. 7: "Golden Earrings" (1947, Mitchell Leisen), with Marlene Dietrich and Ray Milland; and "Morocco" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Sept. 3 at 2:30: "The General" (1926, directed by Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman; silent). . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 6: "The Marriage Circle" (1924, Ernst Lubitsch, silent). . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 2: "Sally of the Sawdust" (1925, D. W. Griffith; silent). . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 5: "Kentucky Pride" (1925, John Ford; silent). . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 2: "The Kid" (1921, Charlie Chaplin; silent). . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 5 and Sept. 7 at 6: "The Black Sheep" (1988, Román Chalbaud; in Spanish). . . . ¶ Sept. 6 at 2: "Show People" (†). . . . ¶ Sept. 6 at 5 and Sept. 7 at 2:30: "Knives of Fire" (1990, Román Chalbaud; in Spanish).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Sept. 1 at 2 and 9: "A Star Is Born" (1954, George Cukor), with Judy Garland and James Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 2 and 6:30 and Sept. 3 at 4: "Five Fingers" (1952, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 4:15 and 8:45 and Sept. 3 at 2: "The Deadly Affair" (1967, Sidney Lumet), with Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 3 at 7, 8:30, and 10; Sept. 4-5 at 9 and 10:30; and Sept. 6 at 10: "Space Is the Place" (1974, John Coney), with Sun Ra. . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 2: "Labyrinth" (1986, Jim Henson). . . . ¶ Sept. 4-5 at 5:30 and Sept. 6 at 5:15: "Lolita" (1962, Stanley Kubrick), with Sue Lyon and Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 2: "Inside the Labyrinth" (1987, Des Saunders), "Jim Henson's The Storyteller: Heartless Giant" (1989, Henson), and "Greek Myths: Perseus and the Gorgon" (1990, David Garfath). . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 3:30 and Sept. 6 at 3:15: "Age of Consent" (1969, Michael Powell), with Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 6 at 2 and 8:15: "Autobiography of a Princess" (1975, James Ivory), with Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 7 at 2: "Julius Caesar" (1953, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Mason. . . . ¶ Sept. 7 at 4:15: "The Desert Fox" (1951, Henry Hathaway), with Mason.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Sept. 4 at 4 and Sept. 5 at 2 and 4:30: Three different programs of films by George Kuchar. . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 2: "Caveman" (†).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 41st St.—Mondays, starting at dusk, free, drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes cartoons, coming attractions, and an onscreen clock that counts down the minutes until the feature begins. Sept. 6: "The Day the Earth Stood Still" (†).

MOVIES IN BRIEF

SEE PRECEDING PAGES FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA"
DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Soldier Blues

JOHN HUSTON'S 1967 adaptation of "Reflections in a Golden Eye," Carson McCullers' novella about a bizarre murder on a Southern Army base during peacetime, gets much of its brilliance from Marlon Brando and much of its flighty comedy from Elizabeth Taylor. Brando plays Major Penderton, a tortured homosexual who clings to a stultifying image of himself as a commander of men. Taylor plays Penderton's wife, Leonora, a social butterfly and a featherbrain. Penderton smolders secretly while Leonora rides horses, gossips, and has sex in a berry patch with Penderton's fellow-officer Lieutenant Colonel Langdon (Brian Keith). All the characters—including Langdon's neurasthenic wife (Julie Harris), his Filipino houseboy (Zorro David), and a strange, silent, voyeuristic private (Robert Forster)—converge like strings on a booby-trapped parabola.

Even when it's melodramatic, Huston's treatment of McCullers' fiction is amazingly effective, considering that the subject is repressed and hidden passion. He never pulled more out of his actors. Without hesitancy or vanity, Brando embodies a man in denial. Whether playacting before a mirror or fantasizing that an enlisted man's existence is "as clean as a rifle barrel," he makes this homunculus breathe. And Taylor's Leonora—with her outsize reactions and selfish gaiety—is a unique creation: an overripe infant. Too often, Taylor's beauty has to carry her movies; the revival of this audacious production (it plays at the Gramercy September 1-4, as part of a Taylor retrospective) pays her proper tribute.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Caveman (1981)—A funky, buoyant farce, in which Ringo Starr plays Atouk, a peewee caveman who, in order to win the beautiful Lana (Barbara Bach), learns to stand upright and, in one great day, discovers fire and then cooking. That night, he and his group, sitting around the first campfire, discover musical instruments; in about ten seconds, they're chanting and singing, and thirty seconds later they have moved on to syncopation, and Atouk has become a rock drummer. Making his début as a movie director, Carl Gottlieb (a comedy actor and a co-writer on "Jaws," "Jaws II," and "The Jerk"), gets crack timing from the whole cast and never lets a routine go on too long. The picture doesn't have the dirt or meanness or malice to make you explode with laughter, but it's consistently enjoyable. With John Matuszak, Dennis Quaid, Shelley Long, Jack Gilford, Avery Schreiber, and four dinosaurs. (Created by animation techniques, they're domesticated, parody versions of the scary monsters in sci-fi horror films.) Written by Gottlieb and Rudy DeLuca, who devised a fifteen-word language for the cave people; it's indebted about equally to comic-strip balloonese and Yiddish. Shot in Mexico; with a satiric musical score by Lalo Schifrin.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 4.)

The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)—It introduced "Klaatu baraada nikto" into America's pop vocabulary and shaped baby boomers' ideas of classy sci-fi. Edmund H. North's script tells what happens when an alien named Klaatu (Michael Rennie), accompanied by an eight-foot robot, Gort (Lock Martin), lands a flying saucer in Washington, D.C., and issues a warning: "Join us and live in peace. Or pursue your present course, and face obliteration." The director, Robert Wise, delivers the futuristic fantasy and Klaatu's benign yet stern message in a tense realistic style (heightened by Bernard Herrmann's first sci-fi-thriller score); he stages and shoots the saucer's descent into Washington and the resulting panicky confrontations in brisk, momentous newsreel fashion. Rennie lends an otherworldly suaveness to Klaatu's quest, and the patch of light beneath Gort's visor is transfixing, like the eye of a Cyclops. The human-interest subplot, entangling Rennie with a pert, throaty widow (Patricia Neal) and her open-minded son (Billy Gray), gives youthful believers in spacemen easy emotional access to the drama.—M.S. (Bryant Park; Sept. 6.)

The Firm—That Cub Scout of superstars Tom Cruise is perfectly cast as the go-getting, white-bread hero of John Grisham's tale of chicanery and murder in a hoity-toity Memphis law firm. The director, Sydney Pollack, and his usual phalanx of screenwriters (Robert Towne, David Rayfiel, and David Rabe get script credit) try to improve on their source—and only partially succeed. The clunky plot continues to be riddled with implausibilities, and the movie runs a slack two hours and thirty-four minutes. But Pollack and his team do come up with a more logical line of action and give the hero and his wife (the sexy, skeptical Jeanne Tripplehorn) a smidgen of self-awareness. And they soup up the side characters. Holly Hunter, Gary Busey, Ed Harris, David Strathairn, and Wilford Brimley do themselves proud, and Gene Hackman is in a class by himself, brewing unprecedented mixtures of moral dry rot, fellow feeling, and animal vitality.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Sutton, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1. . . . ¶ East 85th Street; through Sept. 2.)

The Fugitive—Yet another adaptation of an old TV series. This time, however, the movie can stand on its own. Harrison Ford plays Dr. Richard Kimble, who is wrongly accused of murdering his wife and sentenced to death. He manages to escape, courtesy of a great-looking train smash, and goes on the run—hiding under leaves, jumping off a dam, lying low in Chicago—while searching for the true killer. This is nicely judged: you feel the weight of Kimble's raw, solemn panic, but it's good fun rooting for him as he hunts for a way out of each fix. What gives the movie its extra kick, however, is the presence of Tommy Lee Jones, as U.S. Deputy Marshal Sam Gerard, hot on Kimble's trail, and enjoying the heat. Each man knows that the other is a true adversary, and there is mental muscle, not just physical daring, at work on their private common ground. The director is Andrew Davis, who brought us the schlocky "Under Siege"; this is equally tense and insistent, but the two leading men rack it up to a higher level altogether—they even overcome the rude horrors of James

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Newton Howard's soundtrack. It's a pleasure to find a thriller fulfilling its duties with such gusto: the emotions ring solid, the script finds time to relax into backchat, and for once the stunts look like acts of desperation rather than shows of prowess. When everything is happily resolved, you can't suppress a twinge of disappointment; Kimble is so gifted a fugitive by now that you feel he should carry on running and never stop.—A.L. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/16/93.) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Hard Target—A bravura bummer. For all the blinding pyrotechnics, it's basically yet another chapter in this summer's continuously running serial about guys chasing guys. Making his American-movie début, the celebrated Hong Kong action specialist John Woo directs kick-boxing star Jean-Claude Van Damme, who again disguises his Belgian accent by playing a Cajun—a New Orleans-based merchant seaman on the trail of a steely sports entrepreneur (Lance Henriksen) who charges millionaire hunters five hundred thousand bucks for the chance to use homeless Vietnam vets as prey. Chuck Pfarrer, the screenwriter, doesn't put a spin on the timeworn premise of "The Most Dangerous Game"—he appropriates it outright. The gap between primitive, chaotic storytelling and bits and pieces of flashy, expressive moviemaking is more risible than any of the movie's conscious humor. Woo never musters a full head of steam. The king of overkill here is Van Damme—even after perforating an enemy with bullets, he insists on delivering a kick de grâce. The wide-eyed Yancy Butler plays the lady in distress who becomes Van Damme's right-hand gal. Kasi Lemmons, as a righteous cop, brings the film some sanity and warmth, while Wilford Brimley is amusingly ripe as Van Damme's uncle.—M.S. (34th St. East, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Olympia, and National Twin.)

House of Angels—A Swedish production, directed by an Englishman. Colin Nutley's odd, uncertain movie stars Helena Bergström as Fanny, who inherits a house and estate deep in the Swedish countryside. The hook is simple enough: her new home and the surrounding community are placid and cobwebby, but she turns up to claim the property on a Harley-Davidson, wearing black leather and stockings. The old, in other words, must slug it out with the new—we could be watching Sweden's answer to Ealing comedy. Nutley gets it going briskly enough, unveiling a fine array of local gossips and weirdos: but none of them quite takes fire as a character, and the film itself loses heart. The plot seems to run in place instead of pushing forward, and it lacks a true climax—there's a promising party, involving a vicar and a chainsaw, but Nutley cuts away and forgets about it. Many will find this kindly and charming, but there's something fixed about the charm; being both cool and tenderhearted (and filmed in long shot with the sun in her hair), Fanny holds all the aces from the start, and where's the fun in that? In Swedish.—A.L. (Cinema II.)

In the Line of Fire—Clint Eastwood plays Frank Horrigan, a tired-looking middle-aged Secret Service agent who gets wind of a plot to kill the President and marshals his flagging powers in an attempt to stop the assassin (John Malkovich). It's a basic race against the clock: the good guy knows what the bad guy means to do; the villain's preparations and the hero's investigation run on separate tracks until they converge, like runaway trains, at the scene of the intended crime. The heroics are stirring, because the star's ravaged face and stiff, weary gestures tell us that everything Horrigan does costs him something, physically and emotionally. The director, Wolfgang Petersen, isn't a particularly imaginative or stylish filmmaker, but he delivers the goods, and in record time. Both Eastwood's performance and the movie itself have the quality of meat-and-potatoes genre-picture entertainment: nothing fancy, nothing unusual. The only hints of more exotic and unpredictable sensations come from Malkovich, who is threatening to become the most gloriously peculiar screen presence since the heyday of Alastair Sim. Also with Rene Russo. Screenplay by Jeff Maguire; music by Ennio Morricone.—T.R. (7/12/93) (Village Theatre VII, Bay Cinema, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, 62nd & Broadway, and Embassy.)

Jurassic Park—Steven Spielberg's warm-blooded, state-of-the-art dinosaurs are a lot speedier than their nearest movie kin, the galumphing atomic-mutant monsters that crunched Japanese cities under their feet in the fifties and early sixties, and that enables the filmmaker to create dynamic stalk-and-chase sequences. But neither the carnivorous dinos nor the placid herbivores inspire anything close to awe, even with the aid of audience stimulants like surging symphonic music (by the shameless John Williams) and repeated closeups of wide-eyed, openmouthed actors. The screenplay, which is credited to Michael Crichton and David Koepp, reduces Crichton's intricately constructed novel to its bare bones: people running away from hungry animals. For all the ingenuity of the movie's engineering, "Jurassic Park" doesn't have the imagination—or the courage—to take us any place we haven't been a thousand times before. It's just a creature feature on amphetamines. With Jeff Goldblum, Laura Dern, Sam Neill, and Richard Attenborough.— T.R. (6/28/93) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Like Water for Chocolate—Alfonso Arau's sticky, lusty, and rather ludicrous movie is set on a Mexican ranch in 1910. The head of the family is the the unyielding Mama Elena (Regina Torne), who determines the destinies of her three daughters. The youngest, Tita (Lumi Cavazos), must stay at home and never marry. Needless to say, she promptly falls in love. It's the old story, passions trying to burst through the shell of repression, and it infects the rest of the film: well-behaved wedding guests suddenly grow weepy or horny, and the old social order is menaced by bands of roaming revolutionaries. But what should be a struggle turns into a giggle; Arau's style loses its balance, swooning into endless closeups of damp brows and heaving bosoms. Scripted by Laura Esquivel from her own novel. In Spanish.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Manhattan Murder Mystery—Woody Allen's new picture is his lightest and most unabashedly frivolous feature since "Broadway Danny Rose," in 1984. All that the movie aspires to be is a speedy, bubbly screwball-comedy whodunit—something like a Bob Hope vehicle from the forties. It's pleasant enough, but Allen hasn't practiced the simple act of popular entertainment in quite a while, and he's rusty. The humor thins out as the movie goes along, because Allen tends to labor, and even to repeat, his gags. The main characters, Larry and Carol Lipton (Allen and Diane Keaton), suspect that their across-the-hall neighbor has killed his wife, and try to play detective. The modest message of the screenplay (by Allen and Marshall Brickman) is that Larry and Carol's cozy, boring middle-aged marriage is somehow enriched, perhaps even saved, by the danger and excitement of their amateur investigation. You could call the movie a comic version of "Rear Window" if it weren't for the inconvenient fact that "Rear Window" is a much funnier picture. Also with Alan Alda, Anjelica Huston, Jerry Adler, and Lynn Cohen.—T.R. (8/23 & 30/93) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Beekman, Orpheum VII, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Morocco (1930)—Marlene Dietrich's first Hollywood film, and perhaps Josef von Sternberg's most effective piece of romantic mythmaking. It's enchantingly silly, full of soulful grand passions, drifting cigarette smoke, and a few too many pictorial shots of the Foreign Legion marching this way and that. Dietrich is Amy Jolly, a mysterious woman, with a past she won't talk about, who arrives in Morocco and gets a job singing in a rough café. You feel that she's a real performer here: when she comes out to sing, her energy level soars. For her first number, she appears in top hat, white tie, and tails; a Legionnaire (Gary Cooper) shushes the raucous, jeering crowd. She sings, in a deep, harsh voice, and then, in perhaps the most daring moment in all of her pictures, she eyes a woman at a table, takes a flower from her, kisses the startled woman on the mouth, and, turning, tosses the flower to Cooper. When, in a feather boa and a short leotard that shows off her long sleek legs, she sings "What am I bid for my apples?," the Legionnaire knows just what to offer. Dietrich is at the peak of her naughty perfection—cool effrontery and a hint of amusement. The contrast of her high, rounded forehead and Madonna-like face with her low, uncouth voice provides an extraordinary sexual charge; her torso is sturdier than in her later movies, and her upper arms look full and strong, yet her face seems more ethereal than perhaps at any other time. Still the German Dietrich—not the almost abstract, international Dietrich she later became—she's charming throughout, and she and Cooper look great together. This is the movie with the classically giddy, ridiculously satisfying romantic finish: she says goodbye to the rich, kind, worldly Adolphe Menjou, who loves her, kicks off her high heels, and follows Cooper and the departing Legionnaires into the desert.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Sept. 7.)

Rising Sun—Philip Kaufman's witty, luxuriantly sinister mystery thriller is set in contemporary Los Angeles: a sleek, corporate environment that isn't merely shady and deceitful, but fundamentally inauthentic, like virtual reality. The murder of a blond party girl in the boardroom of a powerful Japanese corporation exposes a dense network of connections—among business enterprises (Japanese and American), politicians, the police, and the press. The L.A.P.D. detectives investigating the case—Connor (Sean Connery), a Japan expert, and Smith (Wesley Snipes), his young partner—don't stand heroically apart from this alluring corporate culture; they're ambiguous heroes in a looking-glass world. Connery and Snipes are both wonderful here. Kaufman treats cop-movie narrative conventions and film-noir visual style with a kind of affectionate irony; the picture provides plenty of creepy atmosphere and violent action, and its pace is relentless, but the over-all mood is playful, almost giddy. This detective story is a thrilling and eerily suggestive tour of a territory whose boundaries are maddeningly elusive, murderously fluid. The terrific supporting cast includes Harvey Keitel, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Tia Carrere, Ray Wise, Kevin Anderson, and Mako. Cinematography by Michael Chapman; music by the great Toru Takemitsu. Based on the novel by Michael Crichton.—T.R. (7/26/93) (Coronet, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, and Criterion Center.)

The Secret Garden—Working from a desiccated adaptation (by Caroline Thompson), the director, Agnieszka Holland, lays the pall [illegible] self-conscious artistry over Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic tale of a bratty orphan (Kate Maberly) who learns to embrace life by tending a garden of her own. From the initial illustrations of the girl's cold upbringing in colonial India, to the old-dark-house sequences in the Yorkshire mansion of her morose hunchback uncle (John Lynch), and on to the flowers opening up in time-lapse photography, Holland conceptualizes the material to death. She even poses lambs and rabbits so deliberately that they seem to be robotic. Holland and Thompson edit the story down to basics, pitting the girl, her sickly cousin (Heydon Prowse), and a sturdy peasant lad (Andrew Knott) against the adults who run her uncle's manor. It's as if the moviemakers were trying to cook up a New Age Yorkshire pudding, without meat drippings—what's missing is Burnett's robust optimism and animistic energy. The director can sustain only one mood at a time; she flip-flops from tasteful gloom and doom to ersatz magic and high jinks. And her techniques are painfully bald. When the garden blooms and a children's choir warbles on the soundtrack, the movie is like a music box with all its cogs exposed. Maggie Smith is wasted as the nasty housekeeper, Mrs. Medlock. (Clarence Brown's brisk and handsome 1949 M-G-M production—directed by Fred M. Wilcox, written by Robert Ardrey, and starring Margaret O'Brien—was heartier entertainment.)—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Chelsea Cinemas. . . . ¶ Orpheum VII, and 84th Street Sixplex. Matinées only.)

In Bryant Park on September 6, "The Day the Earth Stood Still."

NELSON BAKERMAN

Show People (1928)—William Randolph Hearst insisted that Marion Davies appear in costume pictures; he liked her to be a romantic maiden, and—what was irreconcilable with her talent—dignified. But in the late twenties she broke out and made some funny pictures: "The Red Mill," "The Fair Coed," the wonderfully good-humored "The Patsy," and this slapstick parody of Gloria Swanson's career—how fame went to her head. Hearst wouldn't let Davies do a custard-pie sequence, despite her pleas and those of the director, King Vidor, and of Laurence Stallings, who was one of the writers. (Many years later, Vidor described the conference that Louis B. Mayer called so that Vidor could make his case to Hearst for the plot necessity of the pie.) The film is light and deft and charming. William Haines plays opposite Davies, and the cast includes Dell Henderson, Polly Moran, and Harry Gribbon. There are also glimpses of Hollywood's fashionable celebrities as themselves: John Gilbert, Mae Murray, Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Elinor Glyn, and Davies the cutup looking very chic. Silent, but with sound effects and a musical score.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 6.)

Silkwood (1983)—An absorbing but cloudy and unfocussed account of Karen Silkwood's union activism, her contamination by plutonium, and her death in a single-car crash. Directed by Mike Nichols, this passive advocacy film raises suspicions of many kinds of nuclear-age foul play; it's permeated with paranoia and hopelessness. As the heroine, Meryl Streep tousles her shag-cut brown hair, chews gum, and talks with a twang; she eyes a man, her head at an angle. She has the external details of "Okie bad girl" down pat, but something is not quite right. She has no natural vitality; she's like a replicant—all shtick. Her performance is muted, and Nichols, whose work here is erratic, soft-pedals everything around her. Kurt Russell, who plays Karen's lover, is used mostly for his bare chest and his dimples. Cher (as Karen's friend and roommate) has a lovely, dark-lady presence, but she's used as a lesbian Mona Lisa, all faraway smiles and shrugs. It's a wan, weak role. As a cosmetician in a mortuary, Diana Scarwid rouses the audience from its motion-picture-appreciation blues. She gets laughs out of her tight walk and her line readings; when she prolongs syllables and twists meanings, she sounds like Jean Harlow as a Valley Girl. Some scenes appear to relate to passages that have been cut, and the end is chopped short. The script is by Nora Ephron and Alice Arlen; the cinematography is by Miroslav Ondříček. The cast includes Craig T. Nelson, Ron Silver, E. Katherine Kerr, Sudie Bond, Josef Sommer, and Fred Ward.—P.K. (Thalia; Sept. 3-6.)

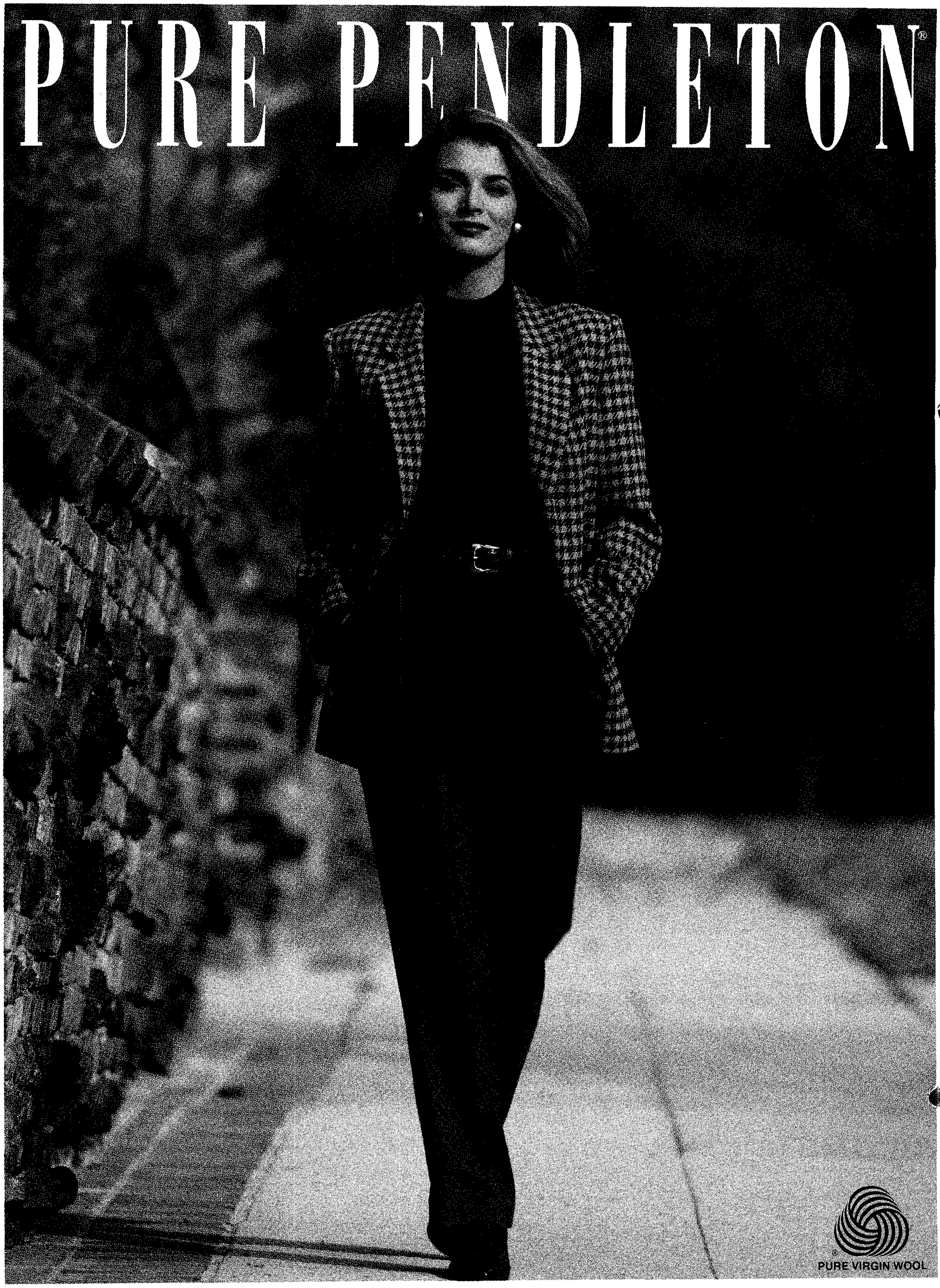
Sleepless in Seattle—A romantic comedy, of sorts. The romance is airy and distant, because the lovers never meet until the final scene, and the comedy is kind of wistful, because it was directed by Nora Ephron. Tom Hanks plays Sam, left miserable by the death of his wife, with only his young son, Jonah (Ross Malinger), to console him. The consolation goes a bit far; Jonah rings up a radio talk show to say that his dad needs love. Many listeners melt with sympathy, none more so than Annie (Meg Ryan), in Baltimore, shortly to be married and none too happy about it. For the rest of the movie, fate—and Jonah—do their best to bring the couple together, despite the continent that divides them. Hanks and Ryan have quick wits, and funny faces to match—they should be striking sparks off each other, not mooching around thousands of miles apart and waiting for something to happen. Hanks has a few goofy outbursts, and there is lively backup from Rosie O'Donnell and Rob Reiner as helpful friends, but anyone expecting another "When Harry Met Sally . . ." will be disappointed. At least Harry *met* Sally.—A.L. (7/19/93) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Baronet, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Such Good Friends (1971)—About the self-abasement of a modern mistreated woman (Dyan Cannon). The director, Otto Preminger, shows us the heroine's subservience to her demanding son-of-a-bitch husband (Laurence Luckinbill); we see that he exploits her and that he's sexually indifferent to her, but we never find out what she wants done about it. Why she allows herself to be used is the missing center of the story. When she makes snide remarks while an impotent man works away on her, and when she services a fat doctor (James Coco), is she getting even with her husband or proving her independence or just intensifying her masochism? "Sensitive" is not a word that is often applied to Preminger; still, one is unprepared for the rancid, fake-smart Manhattan atmosphere, and the ugliness of the malicious jokes. With Burgess Meredith, Jennifer O'Neill, Louise Lasser, Ken Howard, Sam Levene, Nina Foch, Rita Gam, Nancy Guild, and William Redfield. From Lois Gould's novel, adapted by Elaine May, under a pseudonym.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 6-7.)

Tito and Me—Directed by Goran Markovic. In Serbo-Croatian. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

La Vie de Bohème—Aki Kaurismäki's new film is a beautiful comedy about down-and-out artists. The source material is Henri Murger's "Scènes de la vie de Bohème," which was published in the mid-nineteenth century. The movie's action takes place in modern-day Paris, but everything on the screen has a timeless, almost archaic feel. Kaurismäki has created a kind of twilight world, half reverent, half ironic, which allows the ideals and the ardor of the nineteenth-century artist to persist, improbably, in these less idealistic, less ardent times. The three heroes—a painter (Matti Pellonpää), a writer (Andre Wilms), and a musician (Kari Väänänen)—all look to be on the wrong side of forty, and they have the peculiar dignity of aging innocents who have long since stopped worrying about looking silly. Kaurismäki (who also wrote the screenplay) finds the loveliest, most delicate humor in this brotherhood of outcasts. Also with Evelyne Didi, Christine Murillo, Jean-Pierre Léaud, and a silky black dog named Laika, who represents his species nobly. The elegant black-and-white cinematography is by Timo Salminen. In French.—T.R. (8/9/93) (Quad Cinema.)

The Wedding Banquet—Except for the title celebration itself—a ritualized mob scene that gets weirder and funnier as it goes on, culminating in a mass invasion of the honeymoon suite—this cross-cultural, cross-sexual comedy-drama, set in New York City, is just a wan getting-to-know-you fable for alternative families. Ang Lee's film centers on the marital subterfuge of a successful gay Taiwanese immigrant (Winston Chao): despite having a longtime companion (Mitchell Lichtenstein), he weds a struggling artist (May Chin) from mainland China to satisfy his traditional parents, who come from Taiwan for an extended visit as soon as they learn he's engaged. It's the kind of earnest melting-pot story designed to explain everyone to everyone—gays to straights, Taiwanese to mainland Chinese, immigrants to native-born Americans. It's not piercing enough for drama or heartless and inventive enough for farce: the lead characters may be gay, but in comic terms nearly everyone functions as a straight man. Chao and Lichtenstein are likable, but Chin, as the confused, desirous bride, and Sihung Lung and Ah-Leh Gua, as the dignified, well-meaning father and mother, are the ones who deserve cheers. Lee, Neil Peng, and James Schamus did the screenplay.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

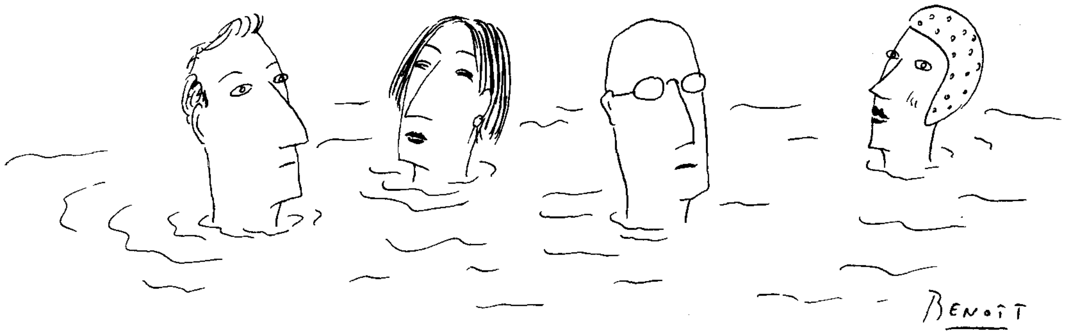
OLD TERRORIST

A FEW days before President Clinton became the focus of all attention on Martha's Vineyard, Virginia Foster Durr, the white dowager of the civil-rights movement, enjoyed a moment in the spotlight. It was her ninetieth birthday, and a large party was thrown for her at the summer home of her daughter Lucy and her son-in-law, Sheldon Hackney, the President's recently confirmed choice to head the National Endowment for the Humanities and, the other week, one of Mr. Clinton's golfing partners on the island. Sitting in a big wicker chair on the porch, while some four hundred people milled around on the lawn, Mrs. Durr heard herself praised by, among others, William Styron, Art Buchwald, C. Vann Woodward, and Lady Bird Johnson, in hyperbolic terms usually reserved for the deceased. Mr. Clinton sent a birthday note, and Mr. Hackney read aloud a separate, more lengthy birthday greeting from Hillary Rodham Clinton. The guests ate hot dogs and hamburgers, said more nice things about Mrs. Durr, and reminisced about what Mrs. Johnson called "a yeasty, we-can-do period in American history." Mr. Styron addressed the guests as "fellow cult members." In the course of the afternoon, Mrs. Durr, white-haired and wearing a pink sweater, a pink kerchief, and a pink skirt, accepted handshakes from nearly all the guests, often repeating, "We've got to come together or this country's going to hell."

Mrs. Durr commands such generous praise not just for what she helped accomplish but for what she gave up in doing so. She was born into a wealthy upper-class family in Birmingham, Alabama. Her grandfather had been a slaveowner, and Miss Virginia Foster, growing up in a household with several black servants, didn't question the system of racial oppression that provided them. "I was a racist, plain and simple," Mrs. Durr reflected at her birthday party, and she recalled that in 1922, on the first night of her sophomore year at Wellesley, she had objected to being seated in the dining hall at the same table as a black student. Her housemistress gave her a choice: sit where she was told or return to Alabama. "It was the first time anyone had ever questioned my beliefs," Mrs. Durr said. (In her autobiography, "Outside the Magic Circle," she called this incident "the origin of a doubt," because "it hurt my faith, my solid conviction of what I had been raised to believe.")

Her full conversion, however, came later, during the Depression, when her husband, the lawyer Clifford Durr, was involved, in Washington, with the government's efforts to help rescue failed American banks. Through his work, she became an enthusiastic supporter of the New Deal, and she committed herself to liberal causes by joining the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee. In 1948, she abandoned the Democratic Party to support Henry Wallace, the Progressive Party candidate, in the Presidential election. Then, in 1955, when Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, Mrs. Durr and her husband helped take the case to the Supreme Court, where a young black lawyer named Fred Gray successfully used it to argue that the city's segregationist laws were unconstitutional.

Speaking at the birthday party, Mr. Gray said, "Clifford Durr taught me how to practice law and advised me on all of those cases, and the person who advised Clifford Durr was Virginia." He presented Mrs. Durr, who remained seated throughout the afternoon, with a small wooden plaque that read "Sit Long, Talk Much." Art Buchwald attributed Mrs. Durr's longevity to the fact that "Virginia has never forgotten a grudge—she has an enemies list going back to Teddy Roosevelt." He suggested that her friends cheer "the scoundrels that kept her young and fit," explaining, "Every time she thinks of retiring from



BENOÎT VAN INNIS

the fray, the name of one of them pops up, and she's ready to fight another day." So the party guests, who included veterans of the civil-rights movement, yellow-dog Southern Democrats, labor organizers, and Clinton Administration appointees, applauded loudly as Mr. Buchwald read the following names: Harry Truman, J. Edgar Hoover, Richard Nixon, Arthur Schlesinger, George Will, Jim Eastland, McGeorge and William Bundy, Roger Baldwin, and Margaret Thatcher. Mrs. Durr scowled as each name was read. "I don't have time to tell you what their crimes were," Mr. Buchwald said, "but I'm certain Virginia will tell you if you just ask her."

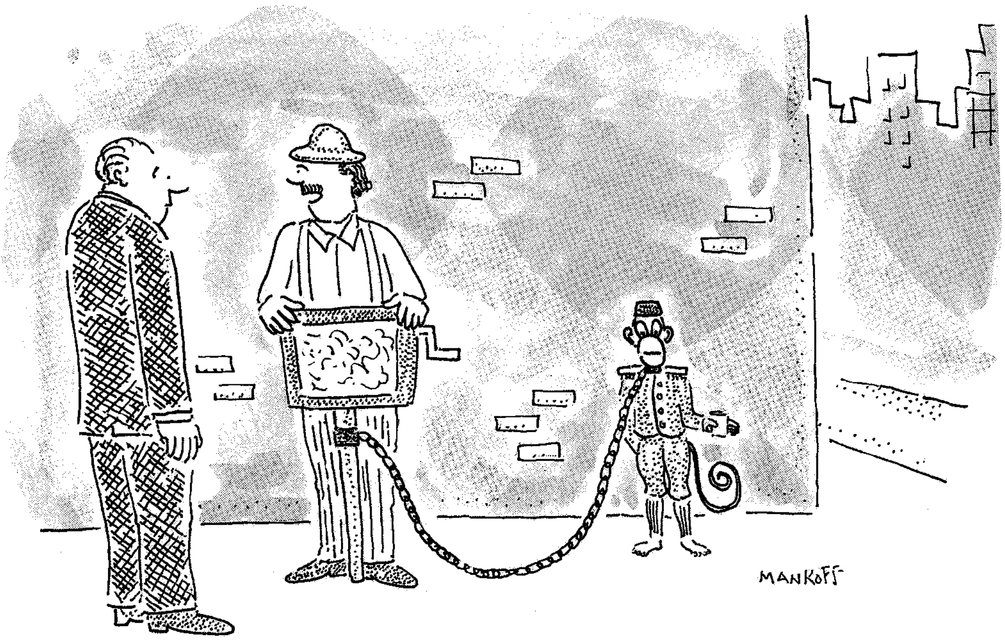
Later in the afternoon, as guests sipped lemonade and ate birthday cake, federal judge Myron Thompson told them how a friend had once characterized Mrs. Durr: "She said, 'Let me tell you about Virginia—she's an absolute bitching terror, but she's our kind of terror.' " Then he wished Mrs. Durr a happy ninetieth birthday with the salutation "Long live terror!"

TOASTMASTER

GOVERNOR CUOMO telephoned the other day sounding almost neighborly. He was in his office, in the Governor's Mansion in Albany, winding up the week. His staff had called earlier with the happy news that Toastmasters International had voted him the outstanding government speaker for 1993. (General H. Norman Schwarzkopf won last year.) When the Governor called, he said he hadn't known much about Toastmasters International—a support group for public speakers, based in Mission Viejo, California—before winning the award, but he sounded pleased, and remarked that giving speeches was never easy. "You still hope it rains," he said. "You hope they'll call up and say they have to cancel, the rabbi's sick."

The Governor talked on, without any prompting, and before long his voice took on a familiar lift and roll. He let drop the fact that a book of his speeches was being published soon. "I've given keynote addresses, I've given Convention addresses, I've talked in huge lecture halls, I've had debates before the Keidanren, in Tokyo—I've had all kinds of situations," he noted, and said that he still wrote his own big speeches but that what he liked best was to speak without any prepared text. "When you're speaking extemporaneously, when you're swimming with the waves and taking the waves, that's the best way to do it."

Governor Cuomo said he didn't always know whether he had given a good speech, but when he'd given a bad speech he usually knew it. "Oh, yeah, stinkers," he said, reflectively. "They're easy to produce." He gives so many speeches these days that sometimes they blur in his mind, but he did say that there was one day recently when he'd given six. He didn't have any tangible rhetorical tips, either, he said. He didn't stand on the dais any particular way; he didn't gargle before going on. "Believe what you say. Don't say it unless you believe it" is his main bit of advice. That was what made Ronald Reagan so effective, he pointed out. "He spoke with a command, an ease, and an assurance that bespoke sincerity." As for historical favorites, "you can say Churchill, you can say Demosthenes, you can say Cicero, but the best is Lincoln."



"Hey, believe me, I tried, but I couldn't find a qualified American who would do this work."

MUSIC UNDERGROUND

IT was like one of those Mickey Rooney–Judy Garland movies in which the kids finally get into the barn and get the show on. This one happened in a small town where the folks turned out in black tie and fancy silk, where they warmed themselves with champagne and caviar, and where the barn was in a forty-foot-deep hole that had been dug in a patch of meadowland eight thousand feet up in the Rockies. When the Joan and Irving Harris Concert Hall finally opened its doors, the week before last, in the glamorous wilds of Aspen, Colorado, everybody said the equivalent of "Gee whillikers!"

"This is the first concert hall of the twenty-first century!" declared one of the stars of the inaugural concert, the violinist Pinchas Zukerman, who had just led the Aspen Chamber Symphony and six teen-age soloists—all of them from the Aspen Music School and most of them girls of Asian descent, dressed in variations of cherry-blossom pink—in four violin concertos by Vivaldi.

"It's a miracle!" said Joan Harris, a Chicago arts activist, who two years ago, with her philanthropist husband, Irving Harris, contributed a million dollars to kick off a campaign for seven million dollars to build the hall. "I never imagined this when I first came to Aspen, in 1968, to get my kids out of Chicago, because I was nervous about violence at the Democratic Convention. I fell in love with the place and its summer music festival, and we've been coming back ever since. Our primary aim was to add to the festival's rehearsal capacity. The old music tent was being used until two and three in the morning, way past the bedtime of performers like Sarah Chang." (Sarah Chang is a twelve-year-old virtuoso who played in Aspen this summer.)

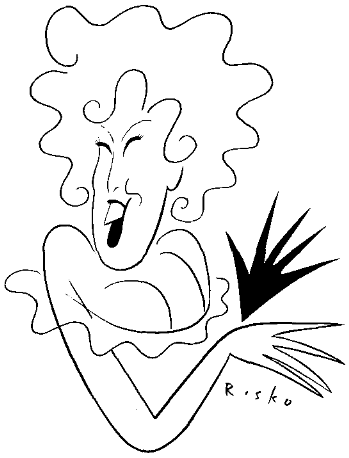
"I love the hall's sound—it's just like being inside a violin," said Dorothy DeLay, the legendary violin pedagogue at Juilliard, who runs a violin program at the Aspen Music School during the summer, and who prepared the young soloists for the Vivaldi. "Conducting in the hall is a complete pleasure," said Lawrence Foster, the festival's music director, who conducted a rousing performance of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony. "The sound is beautiful—without cosmetics. The musicians can hear exactly what the audience hears. This will do so much to elevate the festival. We'll be able to work more on fine details. And contemporary music will really blossom in a hall like this." Elizabeth A. Cohen, the hall's acoustician, said, "It had to be as good sonically for a string quartet as for a symphony orchestra. And the goal was not to create a museum for music but to achieve a living, breathing space, an *active* hall. Everyone on the crew was a prince. Its members became acoustical detectives, staying up all night just to get everything right."

From the outside, what they got right looks more like a fanciful earth sculpture than like any concert hall. It has a roof of tilted white planes, which looks from above like irregularly stacked laundry left out to dry. The façade is three aluminum-and-glass garage doors that slide up and back. The hall itself is a high-ceilinged chamber of natural-colored wood with an adjustable canopy over the stage that can increase or diminish intimacy among the performers. There are wall panels that have black cloth stretched over them and slide back and forth to brighten or dampen the sound; a ceiling of white plaster forms, curved and angled to disperse and channel the sound; and five hundred comfortable, black-upholstered seats, raked for unobstructed views.

A program note said that the architect, Harry Teague, had envisioned the hall as a "monumental, wooden musical instrument, once venerated by an ancient culture who preceded the Ute Indians in the Roaring Fork Valley. When these ancients abandoned the Valley, they left the instrument, which was covered by earth in later ages. The

VIVAT DIVINA!

When I heard that Bette Midler had chosen Northrop Auditorium, in Minneapolis, as the launch site for her Experience the Divine tour, a juggernaut that moves into Radio City for six sold-out weeks starting September 14th, I did a little jig. I knew from teen-age experience that the auditorium had been a Midwestern stop-off point for the Metropolitan Opera, and so assumed that, despite its punishing, barnlike acoustics, the house would be diva-friendly—or, at least, Divina friendly.



ROBERT RISKO

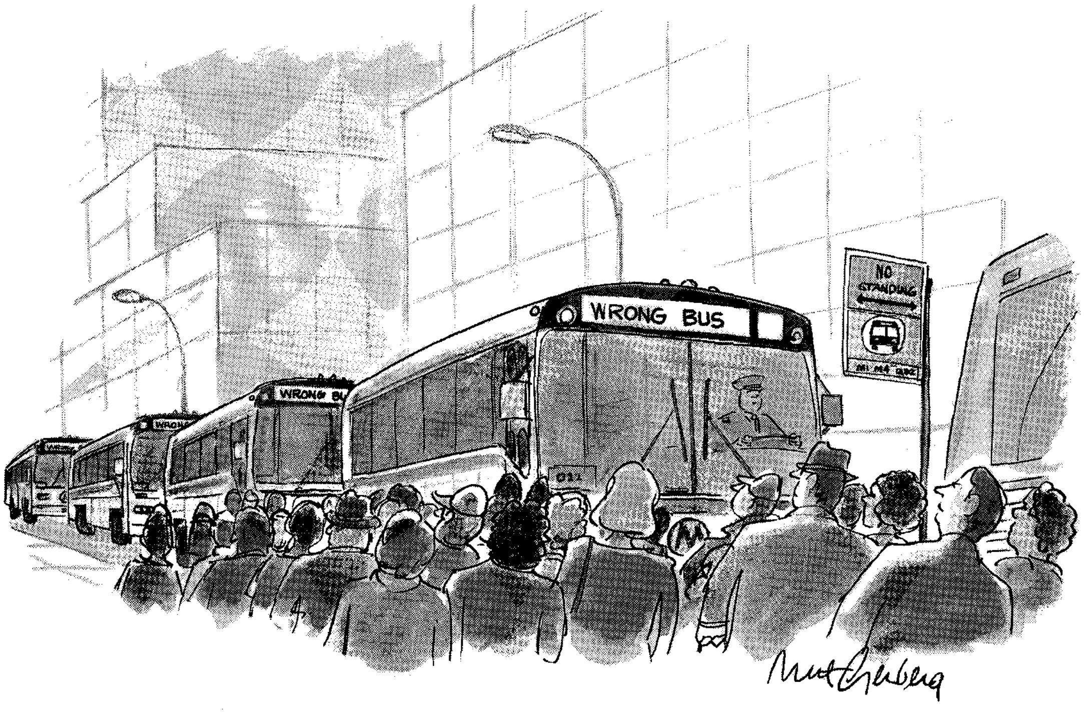
And so it was. On a serene late-August evening, *le tout* Twin Cities turned up at Northrop to watch Midler ring in her first official live engagement in ten years. The singer's audiences have long since diversified from the days when she plied her trade in a West Side gay bathhouse, but you have to hit the road to realize exactly how heterogeneous they are. In my section of the orchestra were a seven-member Mexican family, two very tall drag queens, and an irascible ninety-seven-year-old great-grandmother who during most of the evening kept one ear attached to a baseball-beaming transistor. Before the curtain—which was festooned with Midler's signature red rose—went up on the three-hour, still evolving show, the hall seemed to buzz with the same few questions: Is Bette blond? How's her voice? Will there be mermaids in wheelchairs? To which I can now reply: She is; it's fine; there are.

A few less suspense-settling observations: Midler's decade-long absence from the stage—a period in which, according to the souvenir program, she "married a saint and gave birth to an angel" and starred in hits and flops for Disney—has not diminished her ability to talk trash. (Or to collect it. She's become a fervid composter.) She's still channelling Sophie Tucker, courtesy of the writer Bruce Vilanch. ("I will never forget it, ya know. I was at the supermarket the other day, and a very nice carry-out boy was escorting me to my vehicle. On the way there, I was suddenly and overwhelmingly overcome. I said to him, 'Young man, I have an itchy bootie.' To which he replied, 'Lady, I don't know one Japanese car from another.' ") She's still insulting her three—all new—Harlettes; the young women shimmy about in harem costumes that match the show's vaguely Ottoman décor.

Earlier this year, Midler played Mama Rose for a television version of "Gypsy" (air date: December), and the experience has carried over into the act. She sings two numbers from the musical, chats about Gypsy Rose Lee, and asks her backup dancers to enact a series of naughty tableaux vivants, climaxing in a busty bacchanal that Madonna's upcoming Girlie Show tour will be hard-pressed to top. After one delirium-inducing revel, Midler grabbed the mike and said, "I guess I should forget the ballads and just do this crap."

It was a self-deprecating promise, to be sure. She did do the ballads, both the splendidly classic ones ("Hello in There," "Drinking Again") and the lachrymose contemporary ones ("From a Distance," "Wind Beneath My Wings"). And, wrapped in a sequinned green gown, she concluded the show by crooning a touching version of "The Glory of Love." The commonest criticism of Midler during the past decade—that she has too often undersold her edgy natural talent—seemed to dissolve in the face of pure sentiment. She remains the most desirable closing-time company in the business.

—Brendan Lemon



project is an excavation of that instrument."

The architect himself was less poetic. "Structurally, the hall is like a ship with two hulls," said Mr. Teague, a tall, Harrison Ford-like Aspenite in his late forties, who, standing in front of the hall on the morning after the concert, was dressed in the colors of the hall's interior—black polo shirt and khakis. "The concert space is totally separate from the spaces that house the heating and air-circulating systems. It was designed as a place to make recordings, and it is virtually soundproof." He added, "Everything was done under constraints. A lot of people didn't want the mice in the meadows disturbed. And nobody wanted anything that would compete with the tent." He pointed to a big blue-and-white structure that sits perhaps twenty yards to the west of the new hall. "People have been listening to music in that tent since 1965, through storms, the screeching of magpies, even a shooting. It's lousy acoustically, but it's an icon that had to be respected. The new hall is like a cadenza to the tent. Whereas the tent is perfectly symmetrical, the hall is asymmetrical. Symmetry is the enemy of good music."

WORD PERFECT

IN 1988, not long after they started dating, Peter Chatzky, a Manhattan computer consultant, told Jean Sherman, a writer, that if he was ever to marry not only would the woman have to do the proposing but she would have to do it in an original and creative manner. Since they were both *Times* crossword enthusiasts, Ms. Sherman wrote in November of that year to the newspaper's puzzle editor, Eugene T. Maleska, to ask if it would be possible for her to make a marriage proposal in a *Times* crossword. "I'm writing several months in advance of being totally ready to make this move (Valentine's Day would be terrific)," she added.

Mr. Maleska, who was the editor of the puzzles from 1977 until his death, last month, replied a few days later. "Dear Ms. Sherman," he wrote. "What an interesting letter! As you may have suspected, I cannot grant your request. My puzzles are syndicated to hundreds of newspapers." But then he offered a way around this difficulty. "I can disguise it in a June, 1989, daily puzzle. The entries would include JEAN PROPOSES MARRIAGE and THOU ART PETER, a quotation from Matthew 16:18. I'm sending a copy of your letter to one of my best constructors." The letter went on, "Incidentally, my first puzzle was a personal one, created for a beautiful coed in the same college that I attended. Her name was Jean, and I knew she liked crosswords. I sent her a puzzle. JEAN was 1 Across. The clue was 'Most beautiful girl on campus.' Later we married and had 43 happy years together until cancer took her away from me in 1983. May you and Peter have the same joy for many years to come. Pax, amor et felicitas."

Five months later, in May of 1989, Ms. Sherman wrote to Mr. Maleska to ask on what date in June the crossword would be published, but his answer indicated that he had forgotten all about his promise. She thereupon sent him copies of their previous correspondence, and was quickly rewarded with this reply: "This is really embarrassing! . . . I cannot recall what constructor was asked to create your 'proposal' puzzle. At any rate, it never arrived! I have just sent a letter to another constructor named Albert Klaus. He will probably take a few weeks to put the puzzle together. Another problem is that I have already edited puzzles through August. Hence, it looks as if publication of your crossword will take place in September. Does this mean that my ineptitude has caused your marriage to Peter to be delayed?" Two weeks later, Mr. Maleska wrote again to say that the puzzle would run on September 11, 1989.

Early on September 11th, Ms. Sherman picked up the *Times* from the doormat, and told Mr. Chatzky to do the puzzle. He went pale, she says, as he deciphered the key clues: 1 Across, "Actress Arthur or Simmons"; 5 Across, the Matthew citation; 49 Across, "Tank or Civil War General"; 10 Down, "Declares intention to wed"; 39 Down, "Love and ______, 1955 Emmy-award song"; and 36 Down, "Wedding ceremony response." Mr. Chatzky says, "I put the paper down, and said, 'Uh, I don't think I'm ready to do this puzzle.'" But, ultimately, in June, 1991, they married, in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Although they had invited Mr. Maleska, he demurred, writing that the wedding was too far from his home, in Wareham, Massachusetts. Ms. Sherman arranged their correspondence and the puzzle in a frame, and the frame now hangs over the couple's bed. ♦

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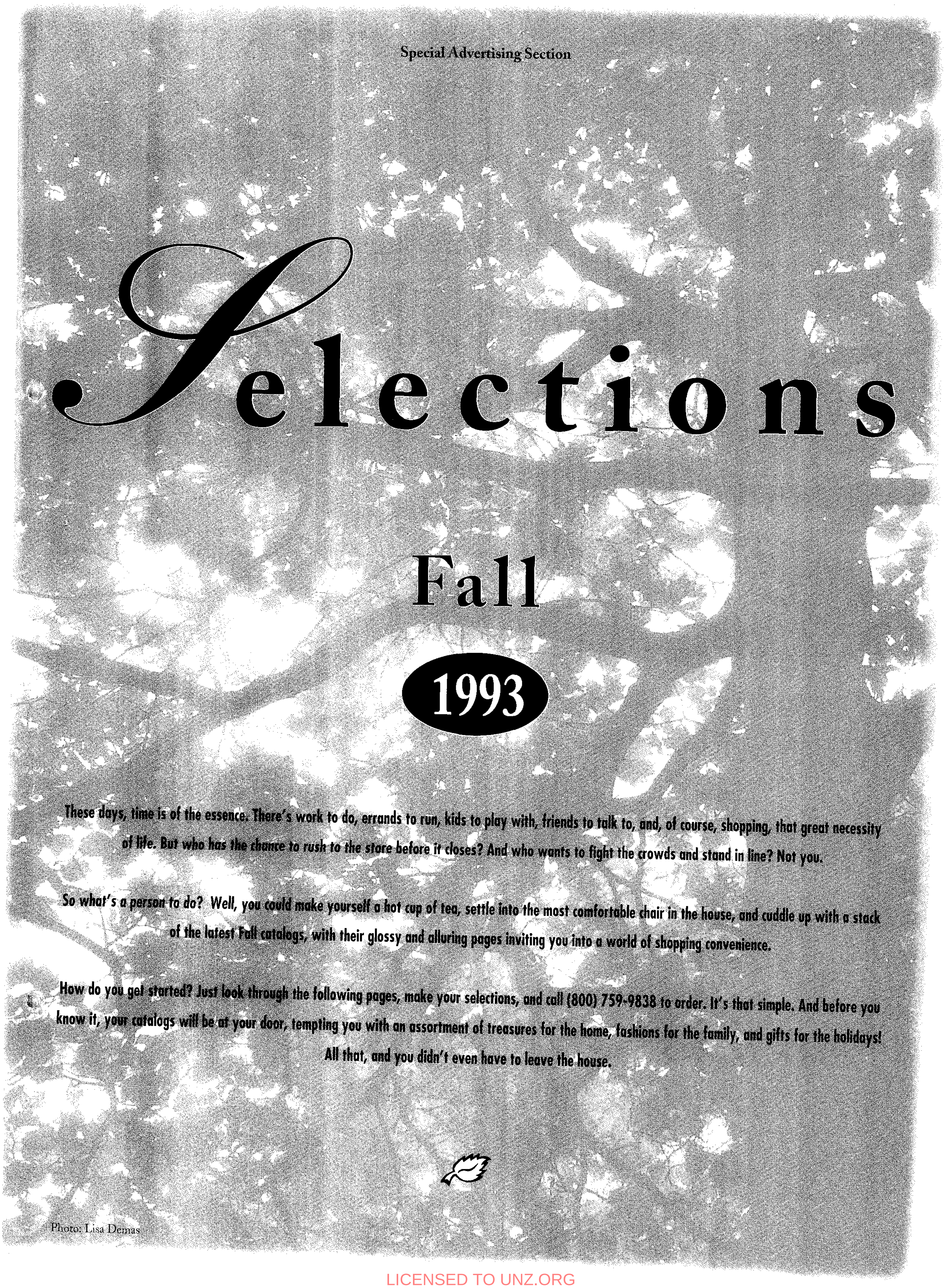

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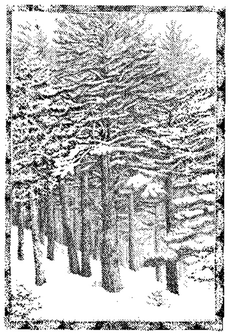

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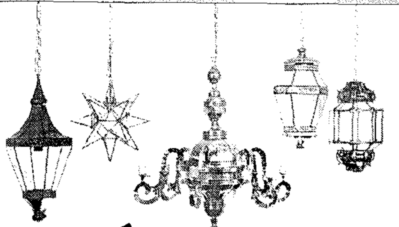

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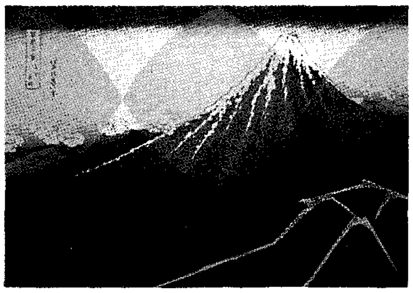

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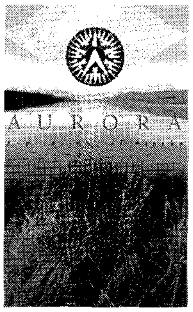

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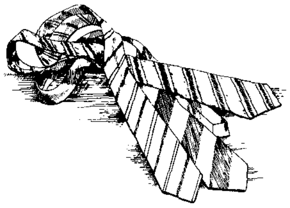

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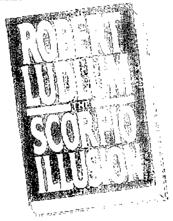

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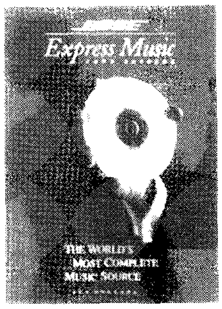

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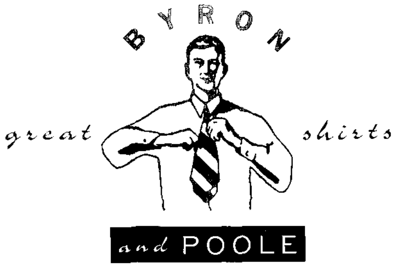

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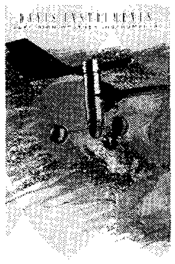

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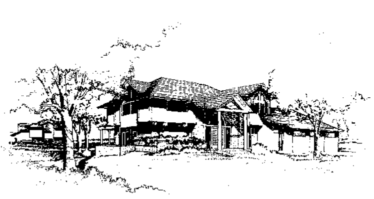

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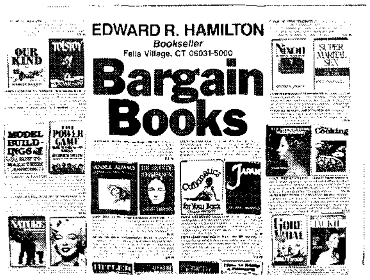
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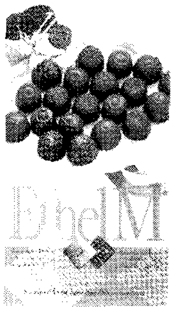

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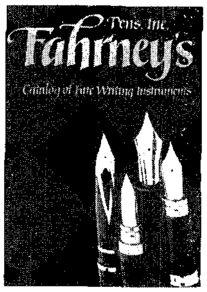
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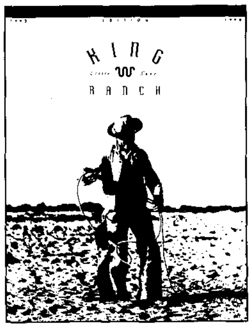

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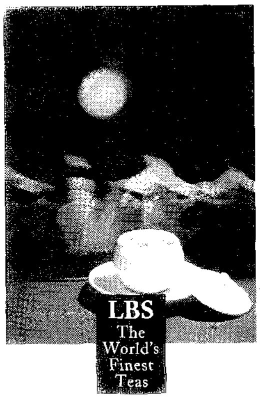

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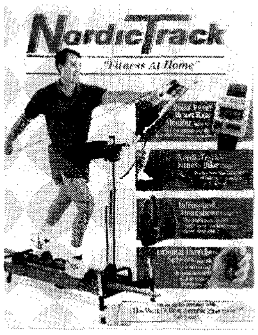

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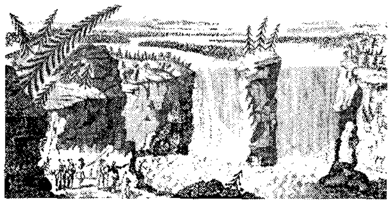

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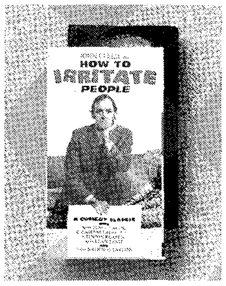

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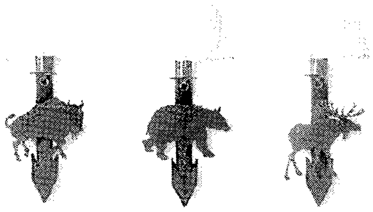

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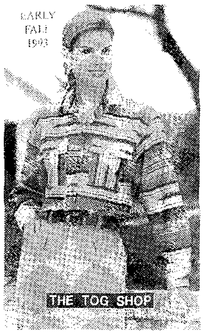

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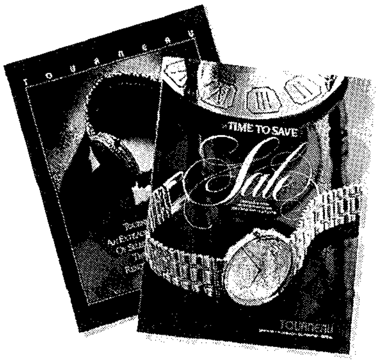

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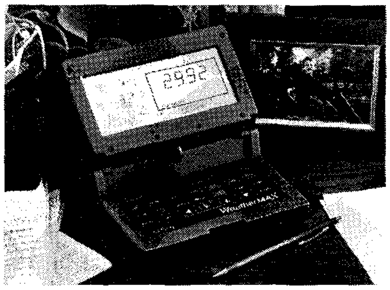

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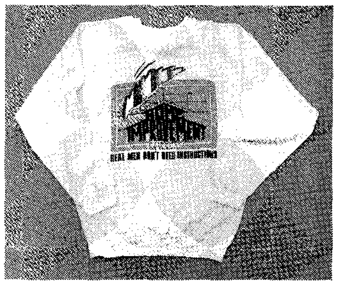

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CLIFFORD SPEAKS

Clark Clifford, barred from discussing his part in the B.C.C.I. case during the trial of his partner, Robert A. Altman, tells of his "two and a half years of hell."

BY MICHAEL R. BESCHLOSS

HAD the charmed life that he enjoyed for eighty-four years abided, Clark McAdams Clifford, now eighty-six, would be spending this morning in the vast corner office of his law firm, Clifford & Warnke, on the top floor of a marble office building overlooking the White House. Sitting at his often photographed battleship of a desk, which would be holding stacks of papers weighted down by Presidential souvenirs, the former Secretary of Defense and adviser to all the Democratic Presidents from Truman to Carter would probably be on the telephone fielding calls for advice from the Clinton White House—and from *Fortune* 500 clients interested in learning the ways of the Clinton White House.

VICTOR JUHASZ

Instead, the set has been struck. Clifford & Warnke is defunct. Clifford has been obliged to rent out almost all of the firm's old space, and now the old man is sitting in a small office with no view, a room once occupied by one of his young subordinates.

Even in his straitened circumstances, Clifford should be feeling buoyed this morning. Thirteen months ago, he and his partner-protégé, Robert A. Altman, were indicted in New York on eight felony charges of commercial bribery and scheming to defraud and six counts of filing false documents with regulators. The prosecution, led by Robert M. Morgenthau, the Manhattan District Attorney, charged that Clifford and Altman had knowingly and illegally helped the renegade Bank of Credit & Commerce International acquire a Washington, D.C., holding company called First American Bankshares, and then had lied to regulators about it in exchange for millions of dollars in bribes concealed in legal fees and stock options.

It is now three days after the New York jury acquitted Altman—and implicitly Clifford, since the charges against and the defense mounted by both men were the same before Clifford was severed from the trial because of ill health. The verdict, after a five-month trial, was swift. Many of the jurors complained to the press about the weakness of the prosecution's case; the forewoman said that she felt "insulted" by it.

Clifford and Altman are by no means out of the woods. Morgenthau has vowed to pursue his investigation; his team is still trying to get witnesses and records from such far-flung places as Pakistan and Abu Dhabi in the hope of shedding more light on B.C.C.I.'s activities. The Department of Justice could still move against Clifford and his partner, but in the wake of the New York verdict that seems unlikely. A civil suit by the Federal Reserve Board and other actions are still pending.

Sitting in a leather chair under an engraving of a British chief justice, Clifford says that despite his remaining legal troubles, he considers the New York verdict a complete vindication. He recognizes that the public may not see it that way. In a voice no longer strong, he says that he has been through "two and a half years of hell."

"It is my experience that when an individual has undergone the lengthy period of criticism and harsh comments that's gone on—a new charge brought, the prosecutor says, 'Now I've found so-and-so,' and people keep reading it—you don't ever really eradicate that. So I would not expect to get back the standing I had before. I regret that. Because I valued it. I'd worked hard for it. And I liked the fact that members of my family, who are so spread out now, were all gratified by it, and that my friends were conscious of it. I shall work to get as much back as I can. But I'll never get it all back. That's just my opinion."

Clifford is still suffering from the complicated set of medical problems, chiefly a bad heart, that kept him from being tried along with Altman in New York. After a quadruple-bypass operation in March, one of the four bypasses failed, killing a quarter of his heart muscle. His wife, Marny, observes, "He's gone from a vigorous man who was years younger than his chronological age. Now he's bent over. He's aged—oh, I would say a good twelve or fifteen years. I can't tell you the nights and mornings for two years I've come downstairs to see whether Clark was dead or alive."

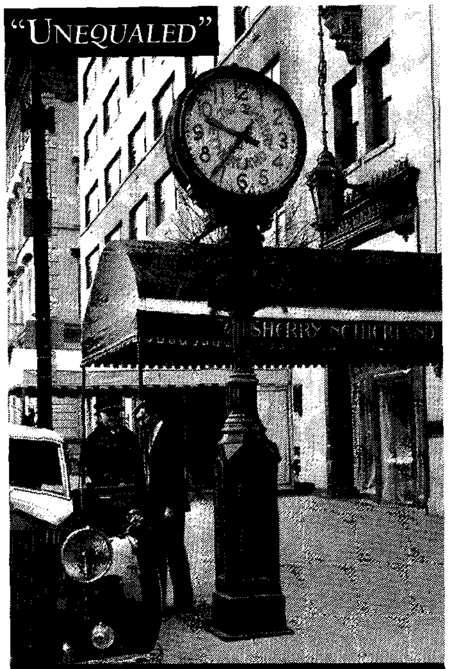
WHAT Clifford refers to as "the trouble" began in January, 1991. He was about to crown one of the most august reputations in postwar Washington with his autobiography, "Counsel to the President," written with Richard Holbrooke (who has just been nominated as Bill Clinton's Ambassador to Germany), which was to be published at the beginning of June. Then the Justice Department announced that it was investigating whether Clifford and Altman, in helping a group of Middle Eastern investors to buy First American, in 1980—and thereby positioning themselves to become chairman and president—had known that the investors were front men for B.C.C.I.

Clifford defended himself before a grand jury and, later, the House Banking Committee by saying that at the time his "judgment" that there was no B.C.C.I. link had been "questionable": "I guess I should have learned it some way. I guess I should have sensed it. I did not." His memoir (parts of which were published in this magazine in the spring of 1991) received excellent reviews, but during his book tour Clifford found that instead of being asked to talk about helping Harry Truman win the 1948 election or about advising on the Vietnam War he was faced with questions about B.C.C.I. The book stayed on the *Times* best-seller list for three months. Its sales fell dramatically, however, as the B.C.C.I. scandal mushroomed.

Clifford had made many friends in his years in Washington, and during his ordeal many of them remained loyal. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, whose husband he had served as personal lawyer and Presidential adviser, invited him and Holbrooke for a cheerful luncheon in her apartment in New York. Lady Bird Johnson called and visited often. The Washington lawyer Lloyd Cutler and Jack Valenti, the president of the Motion Picture Association of America and a onetime Johnson aide, were among his staunchest supporters. Still, Clifford's standing had undeniably slipped; that fall, his name was missing from a list of cronies of Averell Harriman who spoke at a Library of Congress celebration of Harriman's centenary. A guest at the dinner that followed said afterward that "one of the most unforgettable sights" she ever saw was that of Clifford moving unacknowledged through the crowd to take his place at a table: "People did not know how to deal with him." In the summer of 1992, the man whose name had once opened every door in Washington lamented privately, "I've become a social pariah in this town."

At the same time, Clifford's cherished law firm was turning to sand. In 1950, after leaving the Truman White House, he and a lawyer friend from his home town, St. Louis, had started Clifford & Miller. "We really had the blue-ribbon clients," Clifford says nostalgically. "They were really the best." The first, he recalls, was the Phillips Petroleum Company, thanks to Clifford's friendship with Senator Robert S. Kerr, of Oklahoma. In describing Clifford & Miller, he says, "We purposely kept it small, kind of a boutique law firm. But lots of business—important business—to do. I looked at it as a mother looks at her baby child. I conceived it, bore it, started it, and gradually, through the years, built it up. Year after year, I made over a million dollars a year. I was about the first lawyer in Washington to do that. One reason was that we handled important matters. The other was"—he laughs—"we had very low overhead!"

Recalling the firm's origins, Clifford obliquely defends himself against the charge that he knowingly fronted for B.C.C.I. and gambled that no one would find out. He says that at the start of his Washington career as a lawyer-lobbyist



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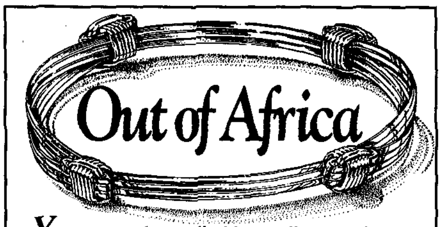

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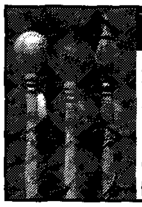

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no one knew more than he how vulnerable he was: "Here I worked five years in the Truman Administration, then I go and start a law firm, and, boy, I wanna tell you, I'm really a target, so I'm just as careful as I can be. If it's something that involves going back to the Truman Administration, I can't take it. So I got through that period, Truman goes out, that burden is removed."

The firm made more millions during the Eisenhower years, "because we know government, we'd got good clients, we'd had three years of practice before Eisenhower came in," he says. "Then in comes Kennedy—I'm very close to Kennedy, but, boy, I really steer clear of difficulties. Johnson? Even closer to Johnson, but still don't take risks like that. So the fact that I got into no difficulty is no accident. I would say that during those years I might be taking two out of each five offers of employment. If I doubted it, I would duck it, and by that means maintain my standing."

In 1969, when Clifford returned to his firm after serving for a year as Johnson's Defense Secretary, he changed the firm's name to embrace one of his former Assistant Secretaries, Paul C. Warnke. In 1977, against Clifford's advice, Warnke left to become the director of Jimmy Carter's Arms Control and Disarmament Administration. Upon returning to the firm, Warnke kept up his writing and speaking—he was a passionate and outspoken opponent of Reagan's nuclear-arms policies—to the point where they caused a rift with Clifford. Rather than air the breach in public, the two men agreed that Warnke would remain with the firm but not as a partner. Adding to their differences was a growing hostility between Warnke and Altman, who had joined the firm in the early seventies and by the end of the decade had become Clifford's honorary son. Alumni of the firm say that by the mid-eighties the ambitious young lawyer had begun earning more of the firm's take than Warnke.

As the B.C.C.I. storm gathered, some of the firm's clients started to slip away. Without telling Clifford, a group consisting of most of his partners—who then numbered ten—spoke to other law firms about finding themselves another home. They made a deal with a Washington firm called Howrey & Simon, and then announced their departure, along with that of many of their clients, to Clifford as a fait accompli. "The parting was not unfriendly," Clifford says. "It was just cold. They could have handled it in a way as a kind of 'merger of firms' or something and taken some of the stigma out of it. But they didn't. It was: Get away from Clifford & Warnke, because it's doomed. By that time, I could see that as far as my practicing law was concerned, it was over."

The federal and New York indictments came on July 28, 1992. Clifford says that for a long time he had not seriously suspected that Morgenthau would take the case to court in New York (where First American had thirteen per cent of its assets). But in the first week of April, while shaving, he had heard a report on the all-news Washington radio station that the publisher and developer Mortimer B. Zuckerman, who was well travelled in New York social and political circles, had predicted it on the television program "The McLaughlin Group."

THE steamy July morning in New York on which Clifford was arraigned remains vivid to him, and his account of the event betrays the angry and astonished feelings of a man who had never expected to be on the wrong side of the law and—perhaps surprisingly, for a trial lawyer—had never understood what those who find themselves there must go through. He readily admits that he no longer has the faith in the system that he once had. "You stand up there before the court. The judge says, 'Guilty or not guilty?' And you say, 'Not guilty.' Then two or three big fat bailiffs take you in charge. You're led out with a guard on either side of you holding your arm, with the press right in front, walking backward and taking pictures. A *felon*, you see. It's really pretty rough. And some of these pictures were in the paper. One friend of Marny's called—she was crying—and she said, 'I saw the picture of Clark. I've just been sick over it. I cried all day over it.' Then you're led to an adjoining building and you go into the crappiest place you ever saw. And there you're *fingerprinted*. You sit and you're fingerprinted. They do it two or three times on every single finger, for some reason or other. Then you move to another room, where they take your photograph and you're given a number. They first take a head-on photo. Then they take a profile photo, and you're entered into the records as a charged felon. Then you come out of there, and the press is waiting, and you walk some more and you're being asked questions all this time—do you see? It's a rough go. It's a really rough go."

Clifford notes that up to this time there had been "newspaper stories and suggestions of impropriety, but all it is so far is what some writer chooses to write," and he goes on, "Overnight, that changes. You are *charged*. You are charged with committing these felonies, do you see, so it gets very different then. People stop calling. I would have a feeling that when I'd see a friend the friend says"—with sardonic humor, Clifford leans forward in his chair, his eyes bulging—" 'God, there's *Clifford*, and he's under *indictment!* My God, do you think there's some possibility that he's going to *prison*?' "

On July 27th, the day before the indictments, all of Clifford's personal bank accounts in New York were frozen. He says, "Those funds constituted my life's savings. The accounts had been set up a great many years ago with the specific purpose of taking care of my wife and children and grandchildren. I'd always heard, all my life, that most lawyers died broke. I wanted to be an exception to the rule."

The charges and the prospect of a trial complicated his relations with his family, Clifford says. He has three grown daughters and twelve grandchildren, who "are totally supportive and totally loving about it," he says. "I've heard from them a lot more these last years than I heard from them before. But I suppose I'd have to say to you that during those darkest days they did wonder whether or not Dad may have been misled—or possibly could he have made a mistake? I think they believe me to be implicitly honest. But could he have made a bad judgment or made a bad decision of some kind? I'm sure that they've worried about it. They were terribly upset over the charge that I'd accepted an enormous bribe. It made such an ugly charge in the papers, because people might say, 'I always thought Clifford was honest, but, my God, if he has a chance to take a forty-million-dollar bribe, that may have been too much.' " He recalls that when a New York tabloid discovered that a recently opened grill in Brooklyn had been started by a Clifford granddaughter it ran a photograph of the place with the caption "Tainted Restaurant."

In September of 1992, Clifford re-

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members thinking, "Whatever I have left, I'm going to give to try to beat my way back." He was worried that "I would die and still be under an indictment," he says. "I'd prepare for bed, and as I'm getting into bed, it's with a certain sense of dread, because sometime during the night I'm going to wake, and I lie there and I try the case. And I think about my own testimony. I think about the strategy. And then, after a bit, restlessly perhaps, you go back to sleep."

By this time, Clifford was gravely ill. He had had a heart attack in 1977 and had been on medication ever since, but by now the drugs were no longer working. Doctors told him that three of his heart's arterial systems were ninety per cent blocked and the fourth was seventy per cent blocked. They demanded an immediate bypass operation.

Wesley M. Oler, Clifford's doctor, says that the consulting doctors felt that, given Clifford's age and some of his other health problems, the chances that he would die on the operating table were one in five. Without the operation, Clifford would "certainly" not have survived, Oler says. Oler recalls that he "waited on tenterhooks" as Clifford pondered whether to undergo the surgery. Presuming that the trial would begin soon, Clifford refused. By October, hospitalized for hemorrhages and further complications, Clifford was in such pain that he called his doctors to his room and said, "Up till now, I wanted the opportunity to clear my name. Now, after what I've been through, I *just want out!*"

Clifford and his lawyers took the position that if the case was first tried in Washington he would fight, but if the venue was New York he would ask the court to excuse him. When Morgenthau succeeded in getting first chance at the case, Clifford's doctors told the court that if their patient had to live in a New York hotel for a year during the trial he would probably not survive. Five doctors appointed by the courts in Washington and New York examined him and concurred.

After Clifford was severed from the New York case, Oler told him, "As soon as you can get your personal affairs in order, get in and get the operation." Clifford recalls, "The doctors told me, 'You go through the bypass, it'll take you a little longer because of your age, but in four to six months you should be in excellent condition to testify in New York.' I figured I'd go in, convalesce five months, and then go to New York." Expecting the defense team that Clifford and Altman had hired jointly to take a month to present its side, he told Altman, "Put me at the very end of the defense."

Absorbed in the New York defense, Clifford postponed the operation, ignoring his growing heart pains. Then one night, while he was preparing to retire, "I had a buster of an angina." He recalls, "I sat on the side of my bed for quite a while. I was calm and I said, 'This looks like the big casino.' It made a Christian out of me."

On March 23rd of this year, just after the New York trial began, Clifford was operated on. Mrs. Clifford recalls that when the operation was over "he expected, as he always expects, to be Superman—get up and, in a week, go out to the office. He literally thinks that." It was not to be. Clifford says, "After eleven days in the hospital, I went home, then waited to start to feel better. Gradually, instead of feeling better, I felt worse. Pains, nausea—oh, awful nausea. Just plain sick." He was taken back to the hospital, and the doctors found that one of the bypasses had failed, causing a severe heart attack, which killed part of the heart muscle. "Part of it may be that I was pretty old to go in and have the operation in the first place," he says. Recovering from the coronary, he recalls, "I went through a stage where I felt beaten up pretty hard, a pretty low period."

Clifford had never been prone to depression. "God, it's a little queer," he says. "I just don't get depressed." His doctors recall that when he was told what had happened he was furious with them for seeming to have failed, and for thus jeopardizing his chance to testify. "He thought he could do a lot for Altman," Oler says.

Clifford returned to his upstairs bedroom in his white clapboard house, in Bethesda, Maryland, and as spring turned to summer he occupied himself by reading a biography of his old ally Dean Acheson and the "Collected Poems" of Yeats. He soon began spending mornings in his office, returning home after one o'clock to sleep all afternoon. Clifford says, "I hadn't come out of the operation too well, but I was going to go up to New York to testify. My doctors were not enthusiastic, but they were going to send up a cardiologist, who would sit right there with me in the courtroom

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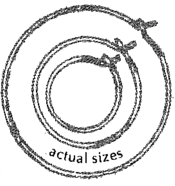

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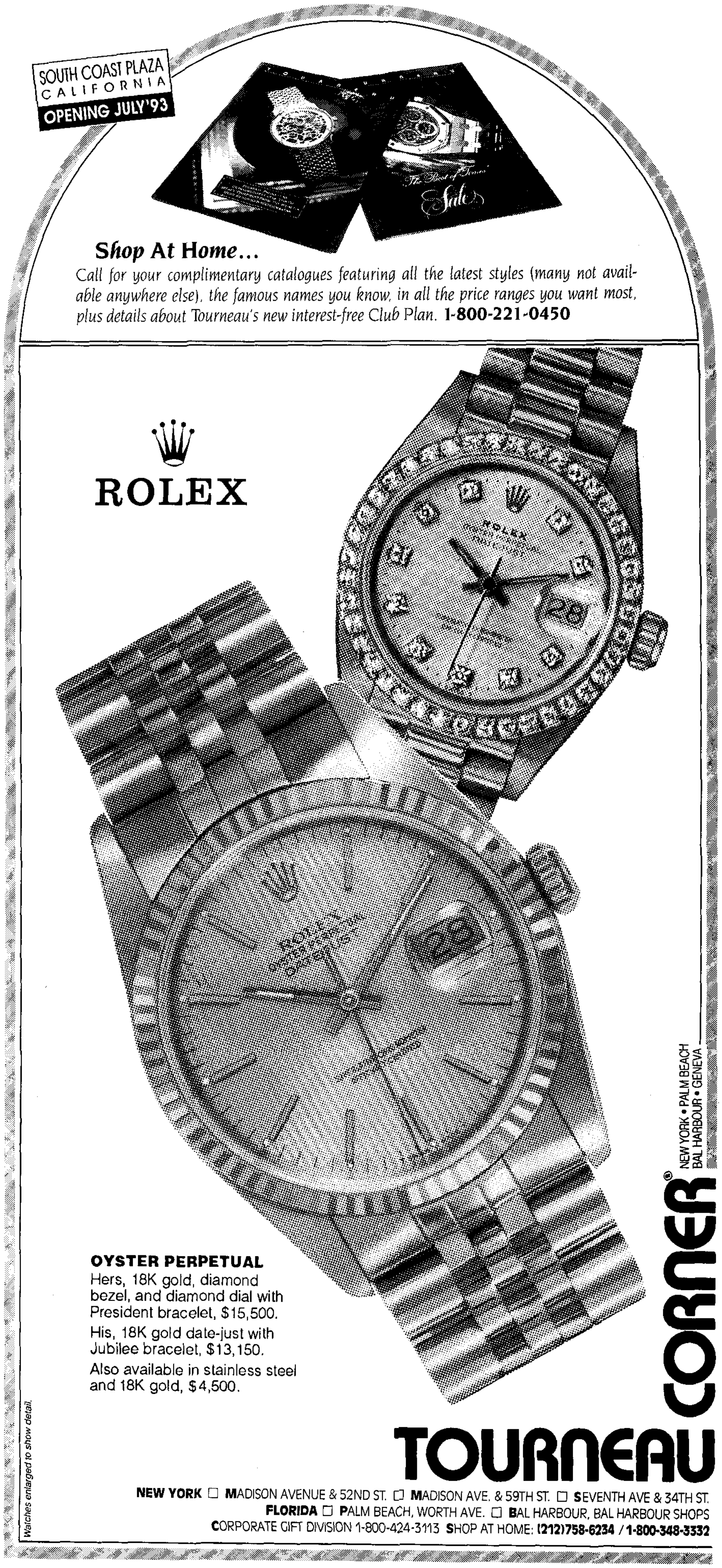
each day." In August, the prosecution rested its case. The defense team decided that that case had been so unpersuasive that they rested their case after twelve minutes, and allowed the jurors to retire.

Monitoring the progress from Washington, Clifford told a caller, "Now's what I call the white-knuckle period." He boasted that Judge John Bradley, citing weak evidence, had dismissed "the most dishonest and most manufactured charge—that Clifford and Altman had accepted a bribe." That day, in a gesture of self-confidence, Clifford ventured out in public for the first time in many months, taking Richard Holbrooke to lunch at the Metropolitan Club. Holbrooke says, "He wanted to show everyone he was alive and well." The meal was interrupted several times by warm greetings from fellow-diners.

On Saturday evening, August 14th, at about seven, while Clifford was asleep in his bedroom, the telephone rang. Mrs. Clifford picked it up. It was Altman. He said, "Marny, they've freed me." She woke her husband and told him the news. A few hours later, as he was getting ready for bed, he remembered the dozens of nights he had awakened from a fitful sleep and tried the case in his head. This time, he told his wife, "I hope I wake up during the night." At three or four o'clock Sunday morning, he did. "I just lay there and glowed," he says.

Later that Sunday, Clifford had himself driven to his office to begin mopping up after the verdict. He told one caller, "It's so significant. There were forty-five witnesses, months of deliberations, government teams all over the world. And the jury told them, 'You never had a case.' Did you see the piece on the front page of the Washington *Post* this morning? It had the play Altman and I had hoped for." At home, Marny Clifford answered congratulatory telephone calls. She says, "We were both absolute wrecks by the end of the day."

If Clifford harbors any resentment against Altman, it does not pass his lips. He says, "I have the greatest respect for him, and the manner in which he handled his last ordeal has deepened my respect. To go through this at a younger age—in his middle forties, I think he is—going to court every day, working every night with the lawyers. He showed character and stamina, and my admiration for him increased. In my opinion, he must not forsake the law. He has an ex-



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cellent background now in the law, and I think he'd be exceedingly valuable to a law firm. Now, whether it's in Washington or some other place he'd have to decide."

REFLECTING on his "two-and-a-half-year nightmare," Clifford says that he was bolstered less by religion than by the Kipling poem "If." After quoting "If you can keep your head when all about you Are losing theirs and blaming it on you, If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, But make allowance for their doubting too," he adds, "Do you think that's too corny?"

Throughout the ordeal, he did not "miss a day shaving, showering," he says. "I don't drink. I don't smoke. I came to learn a long time ago, as I watched my colleagues at the bar, watched men in government, that one of the foremost qualities a man has got to develop if he intends to be a real success is discipline. Another is making every conceivable effort that you don't shift any of your burden on those around you. It would be so easy to lash out at everybody. It would be so easy to spend your time railing at fortune."

Clifford's objective now is to "work with the doctors to get my health back," and he knows that that will not be easy. He doubts whether he will plunge back into Democratic Party politics. "That would have to originate with somebody else," he says. "If they were getting a group of old Democrats together to discuss policies and all, why, of course, I'd be available." When his office lease expires, at the end of the year, he expects to find space in another Washington law firm and spend most of his time reading and writing. Three subjects interest him: the "insane" fiscal and defense policies of the Reagan years, the high cost of modern political campaigns, and the "incredible power" of prosecutors. He notes the lack of serious checks on the power of a modern prosecutor, and complains that when a prosecution like his and Altman's fails, the system makes no serious effort to "restore the individual to his former status."

Eager as Clifford and Altman are to declare that they have been exculpated by the New York verdict, they will still have to make their way through the continuing legal thicket that awaits them. And, having spent sixty-five years in the law, Clifford knows better than to presume that one jury's verdict will silence doubters. An editorial in the Washington *Post* said that the New York verdict should be considered to have cleared the two men of guilt in the B.C.C.I. case, but other journals have argued that it merely showed the difficulties Morgenthau's team had in obtaining existing evidence and in proving such a bafflingly complex case, and that the jurors, in clearing the two men of venality, had convicted them of blind heedlessness.

Legal scholars will be arguing about Clifford's case well into the next century. Political historians—even those who take at face value Clifford's claim that he did not know of the B.C.C.I. connection—will question why this man accepted an offer to become chairman of a bank at the age of seventy-five. By that point in his life he had amassed tens of millions of dollars. No one in Washington enjoyed a name more honored for public service and at the same time more feared for backroom political power. One irony of the entire affair is that Clifford's very success in building a reputation in Washington as a canny wielder of power who stood above mere corporate law, lobbying, or politics made him useful to crooks who wished to hide behind it. He explains that his decision to become a banker was a means of avoiding the torpor of old age. With Reagan's election in 1980, it was clear that by the time the next Democratic President was elected, Clifford would be barred by age from further high position; if he could not be Secretary of State (Hubert Humphrey had intended to appoint him if elected), perhaps better to be chairman of a major Washington bank than to soldier on as a lawyer-lobbyist. By yielding to the desire for position, against which he had cautioned so many public men, Clifford opened himself to the danger that his Middle Eastern partners might one day be revealed to be something other than what they appeared to be.

In "Counsel to the President," Clifford tells of his father's patron at the Missouri Pacific Railroad, an executive vice-president named Egan, who one day slumped over on his desk, dead of a heart attack. Frank Clifford had worked for the railroad as an auditor for years, and in a moment his gleaming future vanished. Clifford writes that, because of what happened to his father, he resolved to plan his life to make it "as free as possible from dependence on the decisions of others." He may have succeeded in that goal for most of his life, but he could not control the events of the last few years. "My future rested pretty much in the palm of one man's hand," he says, referring to Morgenthau. "I've never been in that situation before. What he decided changed the course of my life, changed my standing in the country, changed my position with my friends. It affected every phase of my life."

Clifford's reputation as a Presidential counsellor and a lawyer-lobbyist had always rested on the perception that he possessed two invaluable qualities—probity and judgment. In the B.C.C.I. case, he had to sacrifice the notion that he was always wise in order to preserve the notion that he was always honest. Historians will almost certainly find that Clifford's service to the country—advising Truman on the Cold War and his 1948 comeback, helping Kennedy to remake his national-security structure after the Bay of Pigs, guiding Johnson away from further escalation in Vietnam—looms larger than his decision, whether they find it witting or unwitting, to deliver a Washington bank to a group of gangsters. But Clifford knows that Americans who are too young to remember the Truman or the Johnson years think of him primarily in terms of the B.C.C.I. mess. That reality leaves him untranquil as he passes into the late winter of his life. He says that during the trial, younger people, especially among the press, had "very little knowledge of me," and he characterizes their attitude as: "Times change. Who the hell is Clark Clifford? He's just a fellow now that's engaged in some kind of improper conduct, and there's hanky-panky, and, by God, it looks like they've caught him." Clifford goes on, "I left government twenty-four years ago, and then everything that's happened since then—why, they were in high school or graduate school, so they don't know about it. If, by chance, somebody knew something about it, they said, 'Well, this is a guy who got quite a ways up, and, my God, he ran into a slippery place and has fallen clear to the bottom.' As Disraeli said, 'I have climbed to the top of the greasy pole'—and now my audience is gone." ♦

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DOES HOMER HAVE LEGS?

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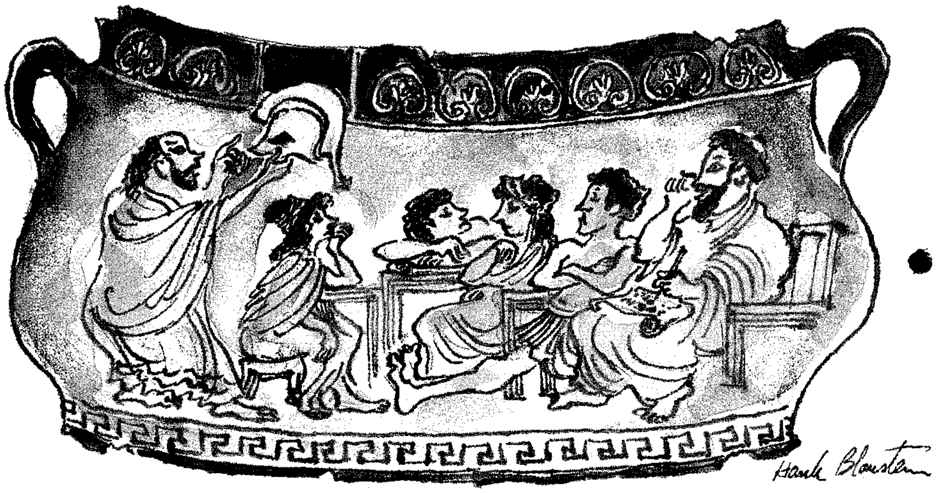
BY DAVID DENBY



HANK BLAUSTEIN

I HAD forgotten. I had forgotten the extremity of its cruelty and tenderness, and, reading it now, turning the Iliad open anywhere in its 15,693 lines, I was shocked. A dying word, "shocked." Few people have been able to use it seriously since Claude Rains said "I'm shocked, *shocked* to find that gambling is going on in here" as he pocketed his winnings in "Casablanca." But it's the only word for excitement and alarm of this intensity. The brutal vitality of the air, the magnificence of ships, wind, and fires; the raging battles, the plains charged with terrified horses, the beasts unstrung and falling; the warriors flung face down in the dust; the ravaged longing for home and family and meadows and the rituals of peace, leading at last to an instant of reconciliation, when even two men who are bitter enemies fall into rapt admiration of each other's nobility and beauty—it is a war poem, and in the Richmond Lattimore translation it has an excruciating vividness, an obsessive observation of horror that causes near-disbelief.

> Idomeneus stabbed at the middle
> of his chest with the spear, and broke the
> bronze armour about him
> which in time before had guarded his body
> from destruction.
> He cried out then, a great cry, broken, the
> spear in him,
> and fell, thunderously, and the spear in his
> heart was stuck fast
> but the heart was panting still and beating
> to shake the butt end
> of the spear.
>
> (XIII, 438-44)

If I had seen that quaking spear in a shopping-mall scare movie, I would have abandoned the sticky floors and headed angrily for the door. Exploitation and dehumanization! Teen-agers never *read* anything—that's why they love this grisly movie trash! Yet here is the image at the beginning of Western literature, and in its most famous book.

The quivering spear was hair-raising, though there were even more frightening images: eyeballs spitted on the ends of spears and held aloft in triumph, a blade entering at the mouth "so that the brazen spearhead smashed its way clean through below the brain in an upward stroke, and the white bones splintered." Homer records these mutilations with an apparent physical relish that can suddenly give way to bitter sorrow (this is one way the images differ from those in horror movies) and a yearning for ordinary life, a yearning expressed with just a phrase, a caress of nostalgia that he slips into the description of the mesmerizing catastrophe before us. The exultant violence is shot through with the most profound dismay. The Greeks, camped outside the walls of Troy, are far from home; but home, and everything lovely

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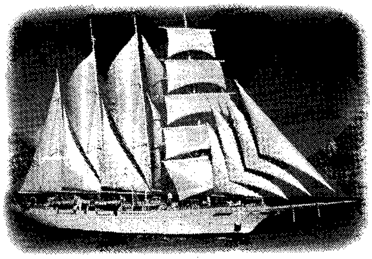

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and proper and comforting that might happen there, is evoked in heartbreaking flashes. There is the case of

> Simoeisios in his stripling's beauty, whom once his mother
> descending from Ida bore beside the banks of Simoeis
> when she had followed her father and mother to tend the sheepflocks.
> Therefore they called him Simoeisios; but he could not
> render again the care of his dear parents; he was short-lived,
> beaten down beneath the spear of high-hearted Aias,
> who struck him as he first came forward beside the nipple
> of the right breast, and the bronze spearhead drove clean through the shoulder.
> He dropped then to the ground in the dust, like some black poplar.
>
> (IV, 474-82)

The nipple of the *right* breast. Homer in his terrifying exactness tells us where the spear comes in and goes out, what limbs are severed; he tells us that the dead will not return to rich soil, that they will not take care of parents, receive pleasure from their young wives. His explicitness has a finality beyond all illusion. In the end, the war (promoted by the gods) will consume almost all of them, Greeks and Trojans alike, sweeping on year after year, in battle after battle—a mystery in its irresistible momentum, its profoundly absorbing moment-to-moment activity and over-all meaninglessness. First, one side drives forward, annihilates hundreds, and is on the edge of victory. Then, a few days later, the other side recovers, often inspired by some god's trick or phantasm—a prod to the sluggish brain of an exhausted warrior—and *that* side advances and carries all before it. When the poem opens, this movement back and forth has been going on for more than nine years.

THE teacher, a small, compact man, about sixty, walked into the room and wrote some initials on the board:

WASP
DWM
WC
DGSI

While most of us tried to figure them out (I had no trouble with the first two, made a lame joke to myself about the third, and was stumped by the fourth), he turned, looked around the class, and said ardently, almost imploringly, "We've only got a year together." His tone was pleading and mournful, that of a lover who feared he might be thwarted. There was an alarming pause. A few students, embarrassed, looked down, and then he said, "This course has been under attack for thirty years. People have said"—he pointed to the top set of initials—"the writers were all white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. It's not true, but it doesn't matter. They've said they were all dead white males. It's not true, but it doesn't matter. That it's all Western Civilization. That's not quite true, either—there are many Western civilizations—but it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is this."

He looked at us, then turned back to the board, considering the initials DGSI carefully, respectfully, rubbing his chin. "Don't Get Sucked In," he said at last. "Don't get sucked in by false ideas. You're not here for political reasons. You're here for very selfish reasons. You're here to build a self. You create a self; you don't inherit it. One way you create it is out of the past. Look, if you find the Iliad dull or invidious or a glorification of war, you're right. It's a poem in your mind; let it take shape in your mind."

Another pause, and I noticed the girl sitting next to me, who had wild frizzed hair and a mass of acne, opening her mouth in panic. Others were smiling. They were freshmen—sorry, *first-year students*—and were not literature majors, necessarily, but a cross-section of students, and therefore future lawyers, accountants, teachers, corporate executives, TV producers, doctors, computer programmers, poets, layabouts. They were taking Humanities: Masterpieces of European Literature and Philosophy—or Lit Hum, as everyone calls it—which is one of the two famous required core-curriculum courses at Columbia College. Lit Hum, which has been around since the late nineteen-thirties, is a standard "great books" course: it begins with Homer (both the Iliad and the Odyssey) and includes works by Sappho, the Greek dramatists, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, the Biblical writers, Augustine, Dante, Boccaccio, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Descartes, Goethe, Austen, and Woolf. The other required core-curriculum course is Contemporary Civilization, or C.C., which was devised in 1919. C.C. is an intro-

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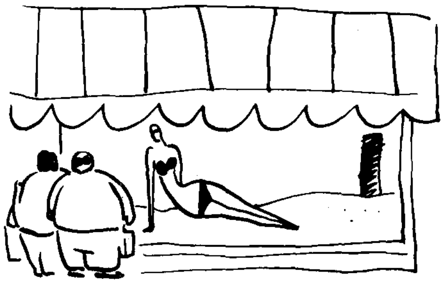
duction to political and social theory, and follows a similar trajectory, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, and including Descartes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, and ending with whomever the individual instructor wants to use to bring things up to the present.

Lit Hum and C.C. are, in brief, precisely the kind of core courses in the literature, philosophy, and political thought of the West that have come under increasing attack in recent decades as "Eurocentric," "hegemonic," and, in general, inappropriate for a country whose population is made up of people from many places besides Europe—descendants of enslaved Africans and of American Indians, for instance. Such political attacks have had the effect of strengthening the drift of the sixties, when many universities, under pressure from student demands for more choice, retained the courses only as electives—which has meant, in practice, that Americans could graduate from a good college without having ever read the Bible, a play by Shakespeare, or a word of philosophy. In recent years, several universities that still required a course in the Western classics (most notoriously, Stanford) have modified the reading lists to include works from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, a move that threatens to turn the course into a pleasantly antinomian mishmash of traditions.

Columbia, though, despite some criticism from within the university, has preserved its core curriculum largely intact. A few women and minority authors were added to the reading lists in the early eighties, but both Lit Hum and C.C., and also two half-year courses in the art and music of the West, are still required of all undergraduates. And the college retains the form of the courses—as intensive seminars for young students. There are no lectures; Lit Hum and C.C. are taught entirely in sections, which might be led by anyone from a full professor, tenured for decades, to a fourth-year graduate student trying to make some money while writing her dissertation. Standing at the beginning of the student's college career, Lit Hum and C.C. were intended to provide an introduction to literary and intellectual study and a first glimpse of some of the leading values and debates of the West. Certain works have been so influential in the culture of the West that no one should graduate from college without reading them—that is the official rationale for the courses. The unofficial and unspoken rationale is "now or never"—that is, grab the students and make them read Sophocles, Kant, and Mill before those students disappear into their major subjects and specialized reading.

As a freshman at the college in 1961, I had taken Lit Hum and C.C. myself and had enjoyed them a good deal. I then largely forgot about them, as one forgets most college courses one takes; exactly how the books had remained in my mind, as a residue of impressions and a framework of taste and sensibility, and even action, I could not say. Having forgotten them as *courses*, I was amazed to discover, in the middle and late eighties, that such seemingly innocent selections of Western classics, and the Western "canon" in general, were coming under increasing fire from "the cultural left" in the universities, especially from a variety of feminist, Marxist, and African-American scholars. "As someone recently remarked," Carolyn G. Heilbrun, a former Columbia professor, wrote in the *Times* last year, "great-books courses teach young men to be warriors the first semester, priests the second; an exaggeration, but a small one." Most attacks, however, were not in this donnishly jocular vein. A typical radical critique of "the canon" denounced the list of books, and the standards by which such books were made classics, as "intellectual property" that had been first frozen as "timeless values" and then passed on from the ruling class of one era to that of the next. The books, in other words, were in some way tainted by their association with power.

A furious counterattack, of course, had also been mounted in the eighties, and the intellectual right, including such public officials as William Bennett and Lynne Cheney, had responded by maintaining that the classic works of the West possessed an almost redemptive political value—that studying the great works would preserve us from Communism or anarchy or authoritarianism, or whatever barbarians were at the gates.



Reading here and there in this debate, I had been overtaken by an increasing sense of unreality. Almost no one, I noticed, appeared to be discussing the books themselves. Instead, the books had become a largely featureless abstraction, a weapon in an ideological war. What, I wondered, did one get out of actually reading a representative list of classics such as those in Columbia's core curriculum? What actually went on in the classroom? Could the books, grouped this way, really be as wicked as the cultural left—or as boring as the cultural right—was making them sound?

In the fall of 1991, thirty years after first entering Columbia, I went back to the university, sat in classes, and began to read the books of the two courses again. But how would I read them? That is, under the aegis of what method? The university literature departments, in their recent devotion to "theory," had so professionalized the act of reading that by 1987 the deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller (formerly of Yale) could remark that in the academy "a resistance to theory is in fact a resistance to reading." In response to this extraordinary statement, one should not make the mistake of underestimating the role played by earlier versions of today's literary theoreticians—medieval Schoolmen, say—in keeping the great works alive. But surely the books included in courses like Columbia's were originally composed not for academics but for the instruction or pleasure of ordinary educated readers. And so I wanted to see if I could read them again as I had read them once and as the eighteen- and nineteen-year-old students at Columbia were reading them now—unarmed, without benefit of the elaborate critical or historical framework that in so many American universities is now considered necessary mediation. "Contextualization," it's called.

"The women in the Iliad," the teacher was saying, "are honor gifts. They're war booty, like tripods. Less than tripods. If any male reading this poem treated women on campus as chattel, it would be very strange. I also trust you to read this and not go out and hack someone to pieces."

Ah, a hipster, I thought. He admitted

the obvious charges against the course in order to minimize them. And he said nothing about transcendental values, supreme masterpieces of the West, and the rest of that. *We're here for selfish reasons.* The voice was pleasant but odd—baritonal, steady, but with traces of mockery garlanding the short, definitive sentences. The intonations drooped, as if he were laying black crape around his words. A hipster wit. He nearly droned, but there were little surprises—ideas inserted in the corners, a sudden expansion of feeling. He had sepulchral wit, like one of Shakespeare's solemnly antic clowns.

I remembered him well enough: Edward Tayler, professor of English. I had taken a course with him twenty-eight years earlier (he was a young instructor then)—not Lit Hum but a course in seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry—and I recalled having been baffled as much as intrigued by his manner, which definitely tended toward the cryptic. He liked to jump around, keep students off balance, hint and retreat; I learned a few things about Donne and Marvell, and left the class with a sigh of relief. In the interim, he had become famous as a teacher, and he was now the sonorously titled Lionel Trilling Professor in the Humanities—the moniker was derived from Columbia's most renowned English professor and critic, a great figure when I was there thirty years ago.

"The hermeneutic circle," he was saying. "That's what Dilthey called it. You don't know what to do with the details unless you have a grip on the structure; and, at the same time, you don't know what to do with the structure unless you know the details. It's true in life and in literature. The hermeneutic circle. It's a vicious circle. Look, we have only a year together. You have to read. There's nothing you'll do in your four years at Columbia that's more important for selfish reasons than reading the books of this course. You're making a self. Read the books and see what version of them appears in your mind."

Could they become selves? From my position at one side of the classroom, I sneaked a look. The men sat with legs stretched all the way out, eyes down on their notes. Some wore caps turned backward. They were eighteen. In their T-shirts, jeans, and turned-around caps,

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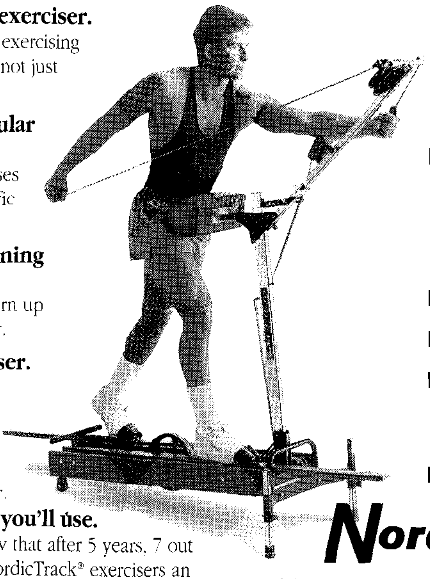

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they had a summer-camp thickness, like counsellors just back from a hike with the ten-year-olds. *Give me a beer.* The women, also in T-shirts and jeans, many with their hair gathered at the back with a rubber band, were more directly attentive; they looked at Professor Tayler, but they looked blankly.

"Look, keep a finger on your psychic pulse as you go," he said, finishing up. "This is a very selfish enterprise."

By the time the action of the Iliad begins, the deed that set off the whole chain of events—a man making off with another man's wife—is barely mentioned by the participants. Paris, a prince of Troy, visiting the house of the Greek king Menelaus, took away, with her full consent, Helen, the king's beautiful wife. Agamemnon, the brother of the cuckold, then put together a loose federation of kings and princes, whose forces voyaged to Troy and laid siege to the city, intending to punish the proud inhabitants and reclaim Helen. But after nine years the foolish act of sexual abandonment that set the whole cataclysm in motion has been virtually forgotten. By this time, Helen considers herself merely a slut, and Paris, more a lover than a fighter, barely comes out to the battlefield. When he does come out, and he and Menelaus fight a kind of duel, the gods muddy the outcome, and the war goes on. After nine years, the war itself is causing the war.

It is almost too much, an extreme and bizarre work of literary art at the very beginning of Western literary art. One wants to rise to it, taking it full in the face, for the poem depicts life at its utmost, a nearly ceaseless activity of marshalling, deploying, advancing, and fleeing, spelled by peaceful periods so strenuous—the councils and feasts and games—that they hardly seem relief from battle. Reading the poem in its entirety is like fronting a storm that refuses to slacken or end. At first, I had to fight my way through it; I wasn't bored, but I was rebellious, my attention a bucking horse unwilling to submit to the harness. It was too long, I thought, too brutal and repetitive, and, for all its power as a portrait of war, strangely distant from us. Where was *Homer* in all this? He was everywhere, selecting and shaping the material; but he was nowhere a palpable presence, a consciousness, and for the modern reader his absence was appalling. No one tells us how to react to the brutalities or to anything else. We are on our own. Movie-fed, I wasn't used to working so hard, and as I sat on my couch at home, reading, my body, in daydreams, kept leaping away from the soft seat and into the bedroom to sink into bed, or to the kitchen, where I would open the fridge. Mentally, I would pull myself back, and eventually I settled down and read and read, though I remained out of balance and sore for a long time.

Other men may have more active recollections—scoring a goal, kissing a girl at the homecoming game, all that autumn-air, pocket-flask Scott Fitzgerald stuff—but my sweetest memory of college is on the nuzzling, sedate side. At the beginning of each semester, I would stand before the books required for my courses, prolonging the moment, like a kid looking through a store window at a bicycle he knows his parents will buy for him. I would soon possess these things, but the act of buying them could be put off. Why rush it? The required books for each course were laid out on shelves in the college bookstore, and I would stare at them a long time, lifting them, turning the pages, pretending I didn't really *need* this one or that, laying it down and then picking it up again. If no one was looking, I would even smell a few of them and feel the pages—I had a thing about books as physical objects, and I was happy when I discovered that Edmund Wilson, my idol, also had strong feelings about the feel and size of a book.

It wasn't just reading that excited me but the *idea* of reading the big books, the promise of enlargement, the adventure of strangeness. The love of reading has within it a collector's passion, the desire to possess: I would swallow the whole store. Reality never entered into this. The difficulty or the tedium of the books, the droning performance of the teacher, the blanking out of my own attention in a post-midterm swoon—none of this mattered at the moment of anticipation, which was renewed each term. I might have spent most of the previous semester in a self-absorbed funk, but I roused myself at the beginning of the new semester for the wonderful ritual of the bookstore. Each time

I stood there, I saw myself serenely absorbing everything, though I was such an abominably slow reader, chewing until the flavor was nearly gone, that I never quite got around to completing the reading list of any course.

And so it has been ever since. Walking home from midtown Manhattan, I am drawn helplessly to a bookstore—Coliseum Books, at Broadway and Fifty-seventh, will do—where I will buy two or three books, which then, often enough, sit on my shelves for years, unread or partly read, until finally, trying to look something up, I will pull one or another out, bewildered that I have it. I like to *own* them: I had grown into a book buyer but not always a book reader—a boon to the book trade, perhaps, but not a boon to myself.

Reading, after eating and sex one of the most natural, central, and satisfying of all acts, had, amazingly, become a vexed experience. I read a great deal, sometimes I read all day long, but most of the stuff was journalism, essays, criticism, or novels that had been adapted into movies and that I needed to check on before writing my weekly movie reviews for a New York magazine, or books by writers whom I never missed (Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, John le Carré) and whose work seemed less like something new than a reacquaintance with trusted friends. But what did I *read*? I mean read seriously? Reading "Swann's Way" was a rapturous experience not likely to be succeeded by the rest of "Remembrance of Things Past." To read anything as densely, lusciously detailed as Proust, you have to set aside a special time, at least ninety minutes of quiet, and though there are people I know who get up early to read Proust, or even a decent new American novel, I couldn't get myself up early, and if I could I would make coffee and read the *Times* in peace before the boys hit the kitchen. My wife, whose life was certainly as disrupted and jangled as mine, still read a great deal, book after book, sometimes plowing straight through an author's entire work. But I no longer had the concentration or the discipline for serious reading; I had lost the habit of just falling into something, the way real readers do, devouring it on the bus, in the tub, at a lunch counter. Movies more than satisfied my desire for trash, but when I picked up a serious book my concentration wandered after twenty pages. My rhythm had

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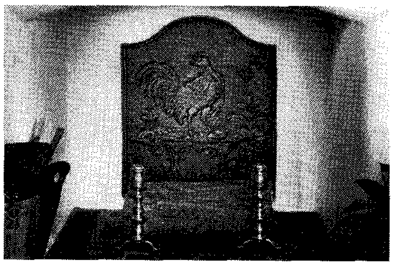

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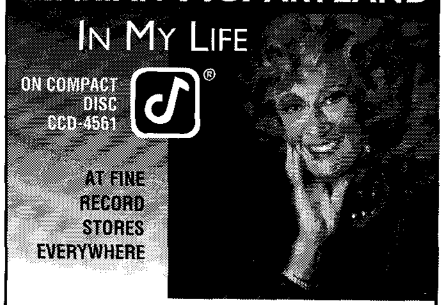

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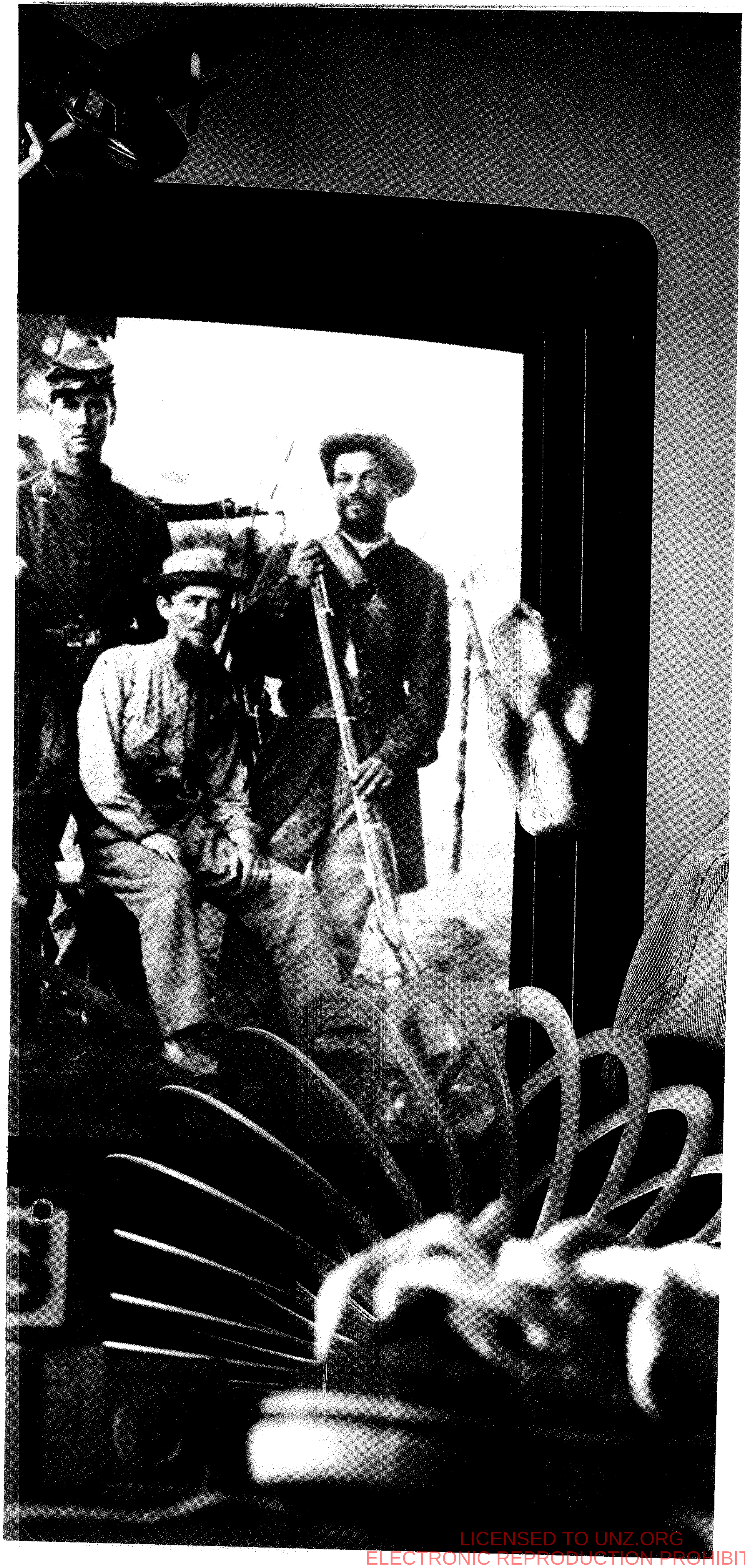

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changed. I was a moviegoer, a magazine reader, a CNN watcher. Following a breaking story on CNN, I would watch updates at certain points during the day, then pick up the story again when a car alarm woke me in the middle of the night, then catch the dénouement in the morning. This business of being "informed" could be almost nightmarish: If you stayed with a story long enough, you began to feel as if you were a ball rolling over and over, or the hands of a clock coming back to the same point.

Going back to school would force me to read the whole shelf in the bookstore. In going back, I would not be searching for my youth—a ghoulish thought. Youth, I now saw, was the most overpraised time of life. Not only was it wasted on the young; it was a waste, period. When you're young, you can't enjoy power or watch your own kids playing, and the money you spend mostly belongs to your parents. I hated being young and relished being middle-aged (more than you were supposed to, more than most people would admit), but I longed for, well, another *chance*, another time spent reading seriously, another shot at school. I longed to submit myself to something greater than my career.

At the age of forty-eight, I stood in front of the shelves in Columbia's bookstore, at Broadway and 115th Street—a larger and better-lit place than the old store from my day, which was so tightly packed that one never got away from that slightly sweet smell that new books have. I was absurdly excited. There they were, the books for the Lit Hum and C.C. courses: the two thick paperback volumes of Homer; the elegant Penguin editions of Aeschylus and Hobbes, with their black borders and uniform typeface; the rather severe-looking academic editions of Rousseau and Locke, all business, with no designs on the covers or backs, just the titles, and, within, rows of rather ugly-looking type—they were as densely printed as law books. I was thrilled by the possibility that they might be *difficult*. I would read, I would study, I would sit with teen-agers.

"It still looks just a little too much like—I don't know—me."

How can a book make one feel injured and exhilarated at the same time? What's shocking about the Iliad is that the nobility and the cruelty of it seem inseparable, like the good and evil twins of some malign fantasy who together form a single unstable and dangerous personality.

Western literature begins with a quarrel over booty between two arrogant pirates. At the beginning of the poem, the various tribes of Greeks who have assembled before the walls of Troy are on the verge of disaster. Agamemnon, their leader and the most powerful of the kings, has kidnapped from a nearby city and taken as a mistress the daughter of one of Apollo's priests, and the god has retaliated by bringing down a plague on them. A peevish, bullying king, unsteady in command, Agamemnon, under pressure from the other leaders, angrily gives the girl back to her father. But then, demanding compensation, he takes the concubine of Achilles, his greatest warrior. Achilles is so outraged by this bit of plundering within the ranks that he comes close to killing Agamemnon, a much older man. Restraining himself, Achilles retires from combat, praying to his mother, the goddess Thetis, for the defeat of his own side; he then sits in his tent playing a lyre and "singing of men's fame" as his friends get cut up by the Trojans.

Can Achilles really be the first hero of our literature? He seems a fool, an infantile narcissist. The first word of the poem is *mēnin*—in old Greek, "rage" or "wrath." Homer means Achilles' rage, the kind of rage that has an element of divine fury in it and destroys armies and breaks cities. But to us Achilles' anger seems less divine than egotistical. His war booty has been stolen by another man. Is not the immense size of his anger almost absurdly out of proportion to its cause? Yet Achilles dominates the poem even as he withdraws; his moody self-preoccupation is part of what makes him fascinating. He creates an aura: we understand something of who he is from Marlon Brando's glamorously sullen performances in his youth. A greater destiny flows from Achilles' angry will than from the settled desires of simpler men.

He is very young, perhaps in his early twenties, fearless, tall, fleet-footed, strong, a compound of muscle and beauty with so powerful a sense of his own precedence that he is willing to let the war go badly when his honor is sullied. The Trojans, led by their stalwart, Hector, kill many Greeks and come close to burning the Greek ships and cutting off their retreat. Hoping to stem the tide, Achilles' tentmate and beloved friend Patroclus enters the battle. He wears Achilles' armor, and in that armor—as a substitute for Achilles—he is slain by Hector.

Achilles' withdrawal now comes to an end. Enraged, inconsolable, he prepares at last to enter the battle. (We are deep into the poem, and we have not yet seen him fight.) The sky darkens, the underworld nearly cracks open. Huge forces, unstoppable, move into place. Achilles begins to fight, expelling his anguish in a rampage. As Book XXI opens, he is driving the Trojans back toward Troy:

> But when they came to the crossing place of
> the fair-running river
> of whirling Xanthos, a stream whose father
> was Zeus the immortal,
> there Achilleus split them and chased some
> back over the flat land
> toward the city, where the Achaians
> themselves had stampeded in terror
> on the day before, when glorious Hektor
> was still in his fury.
> Along this ground they were streaming in
> flight; but Hera let fall
> a deep mist before them to stay them.
> Meanwhile the other half
> were crowded into the silvery whirls of the
> deep-running river
> and tumbled into it in huge clamour, and
> the steep-running water
> sounded, and the banks echoed hugely about
> them, as they out-crying
> tried to swim this way and that, spun about
> in the eddies.
> As before the blast of a fire the locusts
> escaping
> into a river swarm in air, and the fire
> unwearied
> blazes from a sudden start, and the locusts
> huddle in water;
> so before Achilleus the murmuring waters
> of Xanthos
> the deep-whirling were filled with confusion
> of men and of horses.
>
> But heaven-descended Achilleus left his
> spear there on the bank
> leaning against the tamarisks, and leapt in
> like some immortal,
> with only his sword, but his heart was bent
> upon evil actions,
> and he struck in a circle around him. The
> shameful sound of their groaning
> rose as they were struck with the sword, and
> the water was reddened
> with blood. As before a huge-gaping
> dolphin the other fishes

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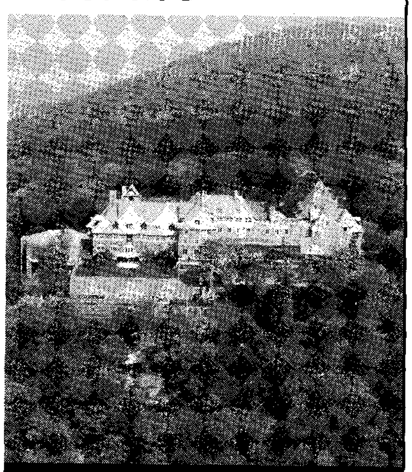

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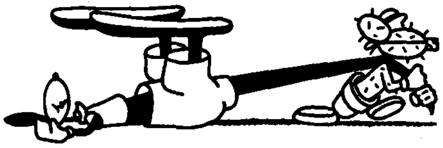
escaping cram the corners of a deepwater harbour
in fear, for he avidly eats up any he can catch;
so the Trojans along the course of the terrible river
shrank under the bluffs. He, when his hands grew weary with killing,
chose out and took twelve young men alive from the river
to be vengeance for the death of Patroklos, the son of Menoitios.
These, bewildered with fear like fawns, he led out of the water
and bound their hands behind them with thongs well cut out of leather,
with the very belts they themselves wore on their ingirt tunics,
and gave them to his companions to lead away to the hollow ships,
then himself whirled back, still in a fury to kill men.
(XXI, 1-33)

Homer didn't have to tell his listeners that the leather thongs, tightening as they dried, would cut into the skin of Achilles' Trojan captives. Nor did he have to explain why Achilles, both the noblest and the cruellest of the heroes, later kills a Trojan warrior, an acquaintance, who begs for mercy at his knees. They would not have praised Achilles, or anyone else, for withholding his sword in battle.

The American reader comes from a society that is nominally ethical. Our legal and administrative system, our Presidential utterances, our popular culture, in which TV policemen rarely fail to care for the victims of crime, are swathed in concern. Since many Americans believe that our society is actually indifferent to hardship, it is no surprise that irony and cynicism barnacle our attitudes toward public life. By contrast, the Greek view was savage, but it was offered without hypocrisy. Accepting death in battle as inevitable, the Greek and Trojan aristocrats of the Iliad experience the world not as pleasant or unpleasant, or as good and evil, but as glorious or shameful. Homer offers a noble rather than an ethical conception of life. You are not good or bad. You are strong or weak, beautiful or ugly, conquering or vanquished, favored by the gods or cursed.

Academic opponents of courses in the Western classics are constantly urging readers to consider "the other": the other cultures, odd to Western tastes, that we have allegedly trampled or rendered marginal, and also the others who are excluded or trivialized within our own culture—women, people of color, anyone who is non-white, non-male, non-Western. But here, in the Iliad, written perhaps in the eighth century B.C., is something like "the other": a race of noble barbarians, stripping corpses of their armor, and reciting their genealogies at one another during huge feasts and even on the field of battle. Kill, plunder, bathe, eat, offer libations to Athena—what do we have to do with these ancient pirates of the Eastern Mediterranean? They address each other with elaborate ceremony, boasts, and threats of violence. Here was "the other," and right at the beginning of our tradition.

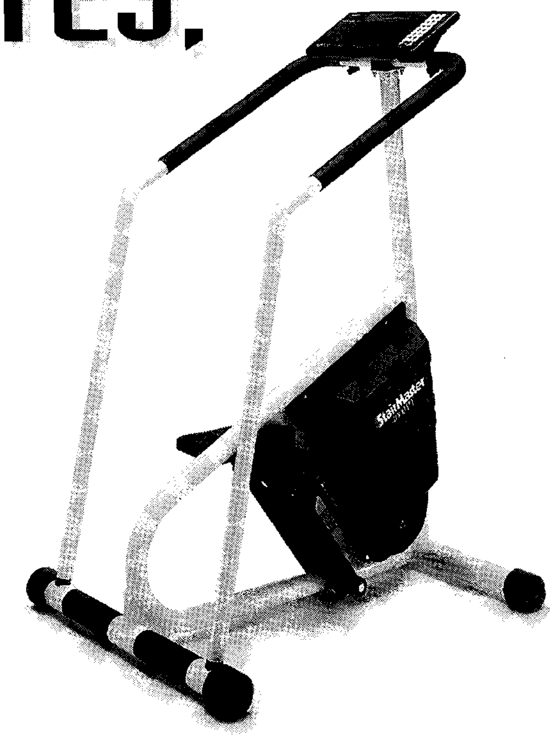
FROM where I sat, on the steps of Low Library, watching them walk around the Columbia campus on the second day of school, the students looked serious, a bit gloomy, and tense. The recession was still on, the tuition was a fortune (about twenty-three thousand dollars, including room and board), and even though many of them received aid, they probably needed more money. They had spent the summer working, I would bet. Anyway, Columbia students never did look too healthy. In my day, the college was heavily populated with city Jews and Italian-Americans, bookish, sallow young men (like me), preoccupied with Sartre and Kafka and Beethoven and the Modern Jazz Quartet, and we smoked—unfiltered cigarettes, mostly, in the Bogart imitation fashionable in the early sixties. We weren't the only students, of course. In fact, we were a minority, my friends and I—English and history majors heading for careers in law, teaching, and journalism—but we had created our own snobbish version of Columbia, which centered on such famous writers (and fairly recent students) as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, and such English teachers as Trilling and his chief disciple, Steven Marcus. There were also the students I thought of as Ivy League boys—noble oarsmen, I called them, who had a haughty but depressed air about them, as if they were disappointed not to be at Princeton. I was prejudiced against them, not only because their manners were different from ours but because they were so often in good shape. Now the male students were generally in better physical shape; they almost all had some muscle tone (infra dig among intellectual students in 1961).



More important, the students weren't all males anymore: women had been admitted in 1982 and now made up half the college. And the size of the minority population had grown. Walking into another Lit Hum section the first week of the semester (I was sampling different approaches), I had nodded to a few students, and then a few more, and had suddenly realized that the class was utterly unlike the ones I had sat in thirty years earlier. In this class of twenty-two first-year students, there were exactly four white males. The students were from Europe, India, Singapore. O America! They were from everywhere. But why was I so surprised? Did I *want* a predominance of white males in the class? In my memory of Lit Hum thirty years ago, half the men sat glumly through the required course, regarding it grouchily as an onerous way station along the road to serious work in physics, history, or chemical engineering. Few words escaped their lips, though they would emit a low whistle of disapproval when an exam was announced. I was not sure I missed them much. Still, an old-grad memory bank had been jolted. If you are a man over forty, you simply do not realize, until you walk into a classroom, how pluralistic American university education has become.

ON the first day of the other required great-books course—Contemporary Civilization—I heard a youthful assistant professor of history, Anders Stephanson, ask a puzzled class if they would agree that the statement "John F. Kennedy was killed on November 22, 1963" could be called "objective." When most of them murmured "yes," he pointed out that the date was a convention and that "a whole series of hegemonic processes" accounted for telling time according to the Christian calendar and not, say, the Chinese or Jewish calendar; and that the books of the C.C. course—the Bible, Descartes, Kant, Mill, et al.—similarly followed the "material development" of Western Europe, the domination of Europe.

So there, I thought, I've heard it, and in my first C.C. class. Nothing could be called objective, nothing could be taken as natural or universal—not even a date. Such was a principal conviction of the "cultural left," the academic insurgents eager to destroy the certainty of Westerners that their ideas and institutions embodied a universal norm. The reading list, however traditional, was the result of an arbitrary process. That the books had survived for so long was proof not of their universality but of the opposite—that they were part of a tradition that had triumphed *politically*. Stephanson didn't even call them "books." He used the standard new-academic word "texts," which has a de-romanticized, disillusioned sound. The texts "represent a condensation of a certain way of putting education before students and saying what is culture and what isn't," he said. "It isn't an innocent list." This notion that lists were not innocent was central to attacks on "the canon." Such lists reeked of exclusion. "The teaching of literature *is* the teaching of values," Henry Louis Gates, Jr., wrote in 1990. "Not inherently, no, but contingently, yes; it is—it has become—the teaching of an aesthetic and political order, in which no women or people of color were ever able to discover the reflection or representation of their images, or hear the resonances of their cultural voices." Gates was arguing not for the dissolution of the traditional canon but for its enlargement to include those missing voices. Many others went much further, however—into a kind of philosophical attack on the hierarchies of judgment which produced lists of classics in the first place. Such lists (and not just Columbia's) amounted to a unitary, or almost unitary, sensibility and set of values, which elected itself as central, even universal, in an endless process of self-confirmation, rather like a club that insisted on the superiority of its own members while refusing to recognize the qualities of anyone else. What was presented in this tradition as "universal" (so the argument went) actually represented no more than the experience and the drive to power of a single group. Universality was not only a false claim, a mystique and an imposture; it was political in its intentions and effects. "The canon," far from being a mere anodyne collection of remarkable works, was a



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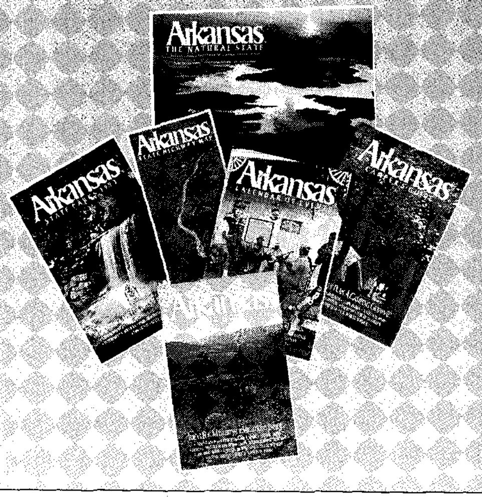


key element in the "hegemony" of white Euro-American males, a disguised ideological spearhead of such Western modes, good and bad, as individualism, market capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.

Professor Stephanson, it turned out, agreed with the radical analysis but not with the radical solution. He saw no reason that a society should not inculcate in its élites the society's leading values. If Tayler, in his Lit Hum section, was saying, "These books will form you," Stephanson was saying, "These books have been *selected* to form you." Yet, as I sat there, I felt not dismay but something like a warming swell of pride. The idea was almost titillating. *We* were the objects of this immense historical process that had been going on since the flowering of Greek literature.

"THINK shape, how it's put together, rather than what the characters feel or don't feel," Professor Tayler was saying in the second meeting of the class. "The Iliad is not a simple glorification of war; something else is happening here. And the something else requires an epic reading."

Enough initials; this was the real thing, the nuts and bolts of literary analysis. He was working with the class on the structure of the huge poem, getting them to see large, over-all movements and then smaller movements and patterns within limited blocks, giving them a handle on the sprawling text which suddenly began to seem not nearly so sprawling. Tayler could be called a historian of ideas, but when he dealt directly with a text he used a method derived from the New Criticism—the dominant approach in the teaching of literature in my days as an undergraduate. New Criticism had actually become rather rare, and Tayler was attempting to do something that some would now regard as impossible or delusional—to let the text "speak for itself."

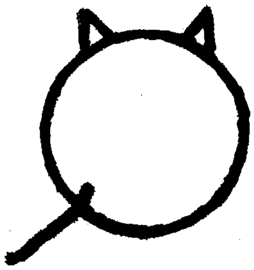
He didn't simply tell the students what he wanted, of course. Imploring and urging, he pulled it out of them, asking leading questions, dropping hints, making them read aloud passages that had no apparent connection, passages spaced far apart in the poem. At times, the class stalled, and he retreated from his point, literally stepping backward and letting his head drop for a moment before approaching from another angle, like a guerrilla force making tentative forays through the jungle. Eventually, he would coax them out of hiding and surround them.

Trapped, a student spoke.

"Um, because Achilles calls this guy he's, y'know, about to kill, 'Friend'?"

The students stumbled a lot, speaking in broken fragments. Some of them would start and then trail off or just stare blankly when Tayler called on them, and suddenly, even though I knew he wasn't going to call on me, my palms began to sweat and I looked down at my notebook, because I didn't always know the answer, either, and school, *school*, came flooding back—a time when I often didn't know the answer. Even worse, he was the kind of teacher who kept a student on the spot, trying to rattle the kid's brain until the answer, lost in the bottom drawers of sloth and forgetfulness, suddenly fell out—something I always hated, because in that situation my brain would usually lock up. Fortunately, he seemed to understand that there was no point in just waiting. When a student went into lockup, he would move away to someone else, or he would take what the student had said, however minimal, and play with it, enlarging it so it made some kind of sense, and then weave it together with the three or four intelligible words that someone *else* had said; and soon these two half-mute students, still flushed with embarrassment, were described as *building* something together, or even as having a full-fledged "disagreement." Which was funny, since neither of them was aware of having said much of anything. Sometimes, emboldened by Tayler's magic tricks, the students would begin talking and actually become the rabbits he had pulled out of the hat. He began as a con artist and ended up holding the class by its ears.

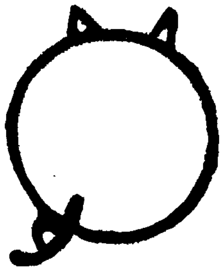
Why was structure so important? The class was a little ragged, but he kept working at it, jumping all over the poem. Would he tie together all the loose ends? Suspense gathered in the spaces between his summarizing remarks. He worked on, say, five books of the poem at a time, getting the students to see a recurring pattern of oaths, truces, duels, and feasts, and after an hour or so (the class met for two hours twice a week) they were beginning to do it without much prodding: they were finding the symmetries—"ring composition," he called it—in which chunks of structural elements returned in the poem but with the elements in reverse order. Then, suddenly, he went to the board and drew something.



"What's this?"

"Cat," said a student named Hurewitz.

"Yeah. And"—Tayler made a new drawing—"Hurewitz, what's this?"



"Rat," said Hurewitz.

"*Rat*? Hurewitz, *c'mon!*"

"Oh, um . . . pig!"

"Yeah. Pig. See, your cultural baggage is novels, movies, and TV; you're used to reading for characters and psychological development. So you can recognize the cat. But if your cultural baggage doesn't let you see the squiggle on the tail, you're lost, you're still lapping milk instead of heading for the trough. This poem isn't a novel." He crossed out the cat. "It's a piggy epic. In all these instances, I've been asking you to look at the squiggle on the tail—asking you to look at a mind that works differently. It's an epic—it works by circles and symmetries. Look, it's a poem about wrath, about a special kind of wrath. Achilles drops out and sits sulking in his tent for days. So what's all this other stuff doing there—the battles and the other heroes? We study all these minor heroes and these patterns because they exemplify different aspects of the heroic code. Then we understand what Achilles means, because he violates the code."

Smiles broke out, relief. The mystification was over—for the time being.

"Intellectual thumbscrews have been applied, and I'm sorry. I apologize for it. What I've been trying to do is to teach you how to read the older works of art.

You have to read something from another culture. There's no psychology in this poem, no conflict between free will and determinism, no subjective and objective. It's an epic—all foreground. See, it's not a random collection of battles: each part gets its emotional counterpart later. As soon as you get used to it, you can get rid of me, which will be a relief to you. You get rid of me, and you get you."

Suddenly, everyone looked up. How would that happen?

The formal approach, I could see, was Tayler's defense against banality. He mentioned the contemporary resistance to reading the Iliad. There had been a time in the late eighties at Columbia when the yearly prospect of reading the poem in Lit Hum had been greeted by a chorus of dismay from some of the younger faculty. It was a poem that oppressed women and glorified war, and it had an infantile hero, and so on. I smiled to myself, because I was thinking some of this myself, and without the benefit of critical theory. Tayler didn't say so in so many words, but I gathered that his opinion was that any idiot could see those things, and you could see them and think you were saying something, while never seeing what the epic poem *was* about. By appropriating it to some modern perception of class, power, gender—none of which much applied to Homer—you made the poem meaningless. The older classics, he implied, would not live if the books were turned into a mere inadequate version of the present.

I got that part, but I still didn't see how studying the poem formally was going to reveal the students to themselves. Did he mean it, or was it just a conceit? Because if he did mean it, it was a tremendous promise—and a frightening one. Did they want to be mucked around with so openly—the girl just out of high school, with long straight hair and a serene way about her; the big guy from California with his legs sprawled out; the Korean boy who said little to anyone but was awfully polite? As for me, the last thing I had wanted at eighteen was to be revealed to myself. And at forty-eight? Maybe it was too late.

THERE was a logic at the heart of the argument against "the canon" which some outsiders found bizarre. Take the situation of women students, for instance. For thousands of years, women generally had been denied higher education and also discouraged from heroic composition in literature, philosophy, painting, and so on. But if until, say, about the seventeenth century this infamous double prohibition had caused women in the West to produce little of superlative value—or little of superlative value which has survived—how could this disaster be used as an argument *against* women's now studying the masterpieces of the past? For women had gained full access to the universities at last. Shouldn't they use it, in part, to study what earlier women had been forced to study on their own or not at all? In "A Room of One's Own," written in 1929, Virginia Woolf had spoken again and again about how it would take not just financial independence but generations of education, and the work of many minor writers, to produce great literature by women. First, women needed to get into the libraries and universities; they needed a thorough grounding in the great work of the past. But wasn't the cultural left—by suggesting that women were in some way "oppressed" by reading works that didn't "represent" them—in effect discouraging women yet again, this time with the highest motives, from studying the works that Woolf thought they needed to read? And wasn't the same underlying logic at work in the insistence that minorities newly admitted into the university should read work that "represented" them, rather than the classic works that their parents had had no chance to read?

Columbia did not accept that logic. It rejected the notion that the reading list of either Lit Hum or C.C. should represent the ethnic and gender composition of the students taking the courses. Representation wasn't the issue. In an opening-day C.C. section taught by Professor Wim Smit—a Dutch-born history professor and then the head of the C.C. program—the question of black writers and black representation had been raised, with some heat, by a black woman student. "Where were *my* people while all this was going on?" she asked. "We were *there*." And Smit, sighing slightly, had said, "They were *there*, but they weren't part of the influence on America. Has Chinese political thinking influenced American political thought? Our free-market economy led to, and molded, our individualistic thinking. African community organization has led to a very different way of thinking—the ideology of community-based organization."

Smit's argument for sticking to the classics, then, was historical *influence*. America's principal institutions—its political and economic system, its language, its jurisprudence, its moral imperatives—were derived from England and Western Europe as filtered through the Founding Fathers and the early political, religious, and intellectual leaders. The C.C. reading list represented the evidence of history, a judgment offered without regard to the feelings of blacks, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, or the many others who had played a large role in the actual building of the country, its railroads, cities, farms, and so on—without regard to anyone who had created its folk culture, its popular speech and humor and music, rather than its legal and market institutions.

In part, Smit was free to make his case for an unchanged C.C. because the university, recognizing the force of such complaints as the black student's, had taken action outside the course. In 1988, Columbia agreed that the two great-books courses, as well as the required courses in Western art and music, might induce a limited and complacent perspective. The college therefore decided to add what it called at the time "the extended core"—the further requirement that all undergraduates take either two half-year courses in another culture (say, Modernist Thought in the Arab World or Latin-American Literature in Translation) or one culture course and a course in contemporary issues (say, Introduction to Gender, Development, and Empowerment or Disease in Modern History). In 1991, the compromise struck many students that I spoke to as a fair one, though the rubric "extended core" rankled some minority students, who felt that it had the sound of an afterthought. By the spring of 1992, the college had changed the name of the requirement to "Cultures and Issues." Columbia had adroitly satisfied both traditional and reformist constituencies, keeping its core curriculum intact while requiring students to look across borders.

WHEN the Greek and Trojan warriors in the Iliad fall, they go down heavily, slowly, like great oaks, with all their lineages, stories, lands, and animals crashing down with them. The slaughter is huge but never imper-

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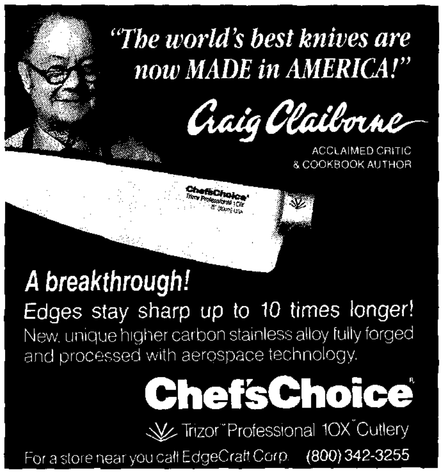

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sonal. You feel each death freshly, as a blow; you never go numb. Everything in the poem has remarkable weight and consequence, even the warriors' boasts. The men address one another formally, recounting the family honors and triumphs: the spears taken from fallen enemies; the shields, helmets, and corselets, all taken "in the pride of their shining." Genteel modern taste forbids boasting (a winner never boasts), but the Homeric vaunting has a far different flavor from, say, two Mafia dons comparing turf. The shining helmets would not be so valuable if the men who wore them had not been of heroic quality. Glory is possible everywhere: it is the helmets in the *pride* of their shining.

Nor is Homer ever indifferent to the ceremonies attendant on behavior or possessions. He insists on the fitness of things. Calling this a "heroic code" doesn't capture the prescriptive and celebratory force of it. Feasting and acts of warfare and of sacrifice to the gods can be performed properly in only one way—superbly, with utmost effort and lavish skill and maximum exposure to failure. Again: nothing could be further from our world. The absence of pity was only the first shock. The second came slowly and was perhaps more a frightened realization than a shock: the splendor of the Iliad, the magnificence of earth, air, and weather and the clash of arms, would not be fully possible if the ethical component ruled the poem. Physical exultation blazes out, untrammelled. It is not a humanist work, and it can't be made into one (though many have tried). When I understood this—and Tayler helped a lot—I stopped fighting the poem. I relaxed; I began to enjoy it, though my attention still wandered away. Imps of distraction invaded my paradise. They came unbidden, summoned by some charge of energy in the poem which would draw from my unconscious a daydream or a series of daydreams—I was a warrior, forging mighty prose—and then I would snap out of it and five minutes had passed, a little pocket of time gone forever.

Surely my concentration was patchier than it once was. As a teen-ager, I had sat on my bed in my parents' apartment in New York, looking up from my book only to study the pattern of woollen threads in the thick afghan lying on the bed. Green, brown, green, brown . . . and then back to Dickens or Tolstoy. I can no longer *submit* to fiction in that way; I read and stop, read and stop, a train halted by obstacles on the track, bad weather, power failures. Everyone complains that young people, growing up on TV, movies, and rap music, lack the patience for a long, complex narrative, and yet as a child I had not watched much television, and the same thing had happened to me in middle age. Had all the movies I'd seen in the last thirty years broken the circuits, sending the lines helter-skelter? A gloomy idea, for, if it's true, my thoughts, such as they were, were doomed to incompleteness, haplessly shifting perspectives, manic intrusions. Snurfling gremlins were moving the furniture around. My thoughts were mediated.

But could movies really be the culprit? My moviegoing friends did not complain of poor concentration. Anyway, with two kids running around, a clever wife, and multiple jobs, I had more to think about than I had had at eighteen. A much larger experience was now casting up its echoes. Perhaps daydreaming was not simply wasted time but an elaboration, a sort of disguised commentary from the deep. Perhaps it was a relief from the ferocity of the poem, too.

How can a man who stays out of the action through many days (and many thousands of lines), angrily keeping to his tent as friends and enemies die, remain the hero of an epic? The answer to this question suggests why the Iliad, for all its frightening strangeness, its violence and barbarity, will not easily yield its place or its predominance at the beginning of our literary tradition.

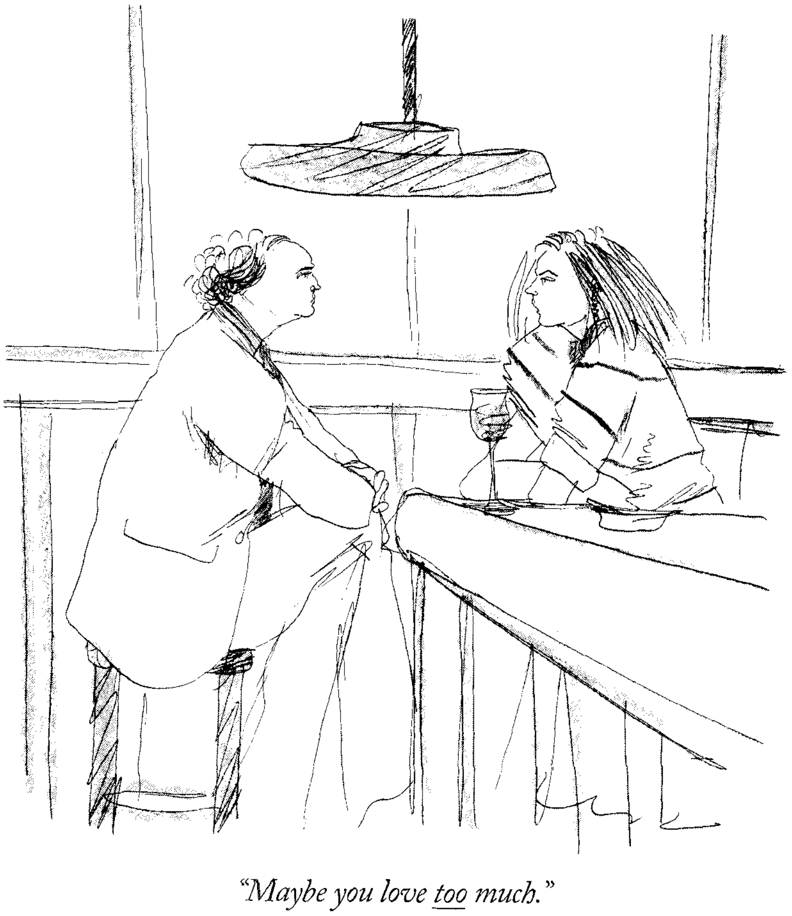
The crux of the poem comes in Book IX, well before Achilles reënters the war. As the Trojans wait at their night fires, ready to attack at dawn, the Greeks, now in serious trouble, send three ambassadors to Achilles with promises of gifts. Tripods, cauldrons, horses, gold, slave women, one of Agamemnon's daughters as a future bride, and even the return of Achilles' slave mistress, whom Agamemnon swears he has never touched—what more can Achilles ask for? According to the warrior code that they all live by, he should take the gifts and return to battle. His honor had been assaulted; now it has been satisfied.

Achilles' initial answer, a staggering Shakespearean speech of a hundred and twenty-two lines, composed in shifting planes of thought and emotion, sounds unlike anything else in the poem, for it shows a man struggling to say what has never been said, or even imagined, before that instant. If the other warriors all hold forth with the awareness of family traditions, honors, trophies, and plunder supporting their words, he speaks only for himself:

For as I detest the doorways of Death, I
detest that man, who
hides one thing in the depths of his heart,
and speaks forth another.
But I will speak to you the way it seems best
to me: neither
do I think the son of Atreus, Agamemnon,
will persuade me,
nor the rest of the Danaans, since there was
no gratitude given
for fighting incessantly forever against your
enemies.
Fate is the same for the man who holds
back, the same if he fights hard.
We are all held in a single honour, the brave
with the weaklings.
A man dies still if he has done nothing, as
one who has done much.
Nothing is won for me, now that my heart
has gone through its afflictions
in forever setting my life on the hazard of
battle.
For as to her unwinged young ones the
mother bird brings back
morsels, wherever she can find them, but as
for herself it is suffering,
such was I, as I lay through all the many
nights unsleeping,
such as I wore through the bloody days of
the fighting,
striving with warriors for the sake of these
men's women. . . .

Of possessions
cattle and fat sheep are things to be had for
the lifting,
and tripods can be won, and the tawny high
heads of horses,
but a man's life cannot come back again, it
cannot be lifted
nor captured again by force, once it has
crossed the teeth's barrier.
(IX, 312-27; 405-09)

The hero turns out to be a hero after all. Achilles' rage, which had seemed almost infantile, a narcissistic wound at most—he has lost his war booty, his slave mistress, to Daddy—has had the remarkable effect of stunning this haughty young man into a new conception of war. Suddenly, he is groping toward an idea of honor that doesn't depend on the bartering of women and goods or on the opinions that men have of one another's prowess. "We are all held in a single honour. . . . A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one who has done much." For the greatest warrior in the world, that is a devastating admission. From our point of view, Achilles has jumped forward to a private, or even spiritual, sense of worth: honor is a matter between a man and Zeus or between a man and himself, and, in the end, no



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one can be compensated for the death of another; the worth of life is immeasurable. When you read this speech against the behavior and the speeches of the other heroes (as Tayler did with his class), you see that Achilles has come close to breaking with the honor/shame code of Homer's warrior society. He has made an attempt, not always successful, to reach consciousness itself, the consciousness that (for a modern reader) has been missing from the poem.

The first hero of consciousness can go only so far; his revolt is incomplete. After Patroclus is slain, Achilles' wrath turns into personal rage at Hector, Patroclus' slayer, and he goes on a rampage (as we've seen), killing everyone in sight; he sacrifices the twelve young men taken in the river, pushes the Trojan army back into the city, and finally kills Hector, whose body he drags around for days. Sleepless and unappeasable, unreachable, he has gone mad with grief.

Now, in the complacent, "humanist" reading of the Iliad, Achilles achieves completeness as a hero at the end of the poem. He gives Hector's body back to the great warrior's father—Priam, the king of Troy. In the scene of Priam's supplication of Achilles, in Book XXIV ("I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through; I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children"), one of the most moving things in all literature, Achilles attains compassion (so the reading goes) and is ready to die. Homer ends the poem with the burial of Hector, but we know that Achilles has chosen glory and an early death rather than a comfortable middle age in the safety of his father's land. His character improved, Achilles gives up cruelty and rejoins the community, and will die as a hero fulfilled.

But this is too pat; it's Sunday-school stuff, or perhaps a Lit Hum reading from fifty years ago. If that were all the poem added up to—the maturing of an arrogant young man—one could more easily agree with those people ready to give the Iliad a rest. But it isn't so. Rage such as Achilles', once awakened, cannot be silenced, for it takes on a new cruelty, the cruelty of thought: the questions he asks about war and death remain unanswered in the poem, because they cannot be answered. The Iliad, for all its vaunting glory, remains in tension with itself, questioning, and even subverting, its own ethos, and it leaves one profoundly uneasy. I felt relief and also a kind of awe when it ended. Could this be the same work that some had castigated as a mere insensible celebration of war? Surely that reading was a mistake, even a malicious mistake. Achilles knows he will attain immortal renown as a hero, yet he's the only one who takes the measure of death. One imagines him at the end of the poem as still inconsolable and unconsoling, still raging somewhere outside the walls. The written civilization of the West begins with a hero who both embodies and questions the nature of civilization as it was then constituted.

A WHITE male and a bourgeois, a man who was reared on the culture of the West, I am not an imperialist, exactly, but I write from within the walls of the imperium and enjoy its protections. Seen from the outside, or by the cultural left, that is my identity. But

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only as seen from outside. For how could identity defined by race, gender, and class (the cultural left's inescapable trinity) account for the use that any of us make of the cards we've been dealt? Or for the way we feel about our own experience? And so, as I was finishing the Iliad, I remembered—I now remembered—that at eighteen, as a freshman reading both core-curriculum courses, I had been dismayed by Homer's war poem. A young man suffering the self-conscious torments of eighteen, I measured the difference between myself and Homer's heroes, and I was not happy about it. I was overawed by physical courage and by the poem's grandeur, which I experienced as a taunt.

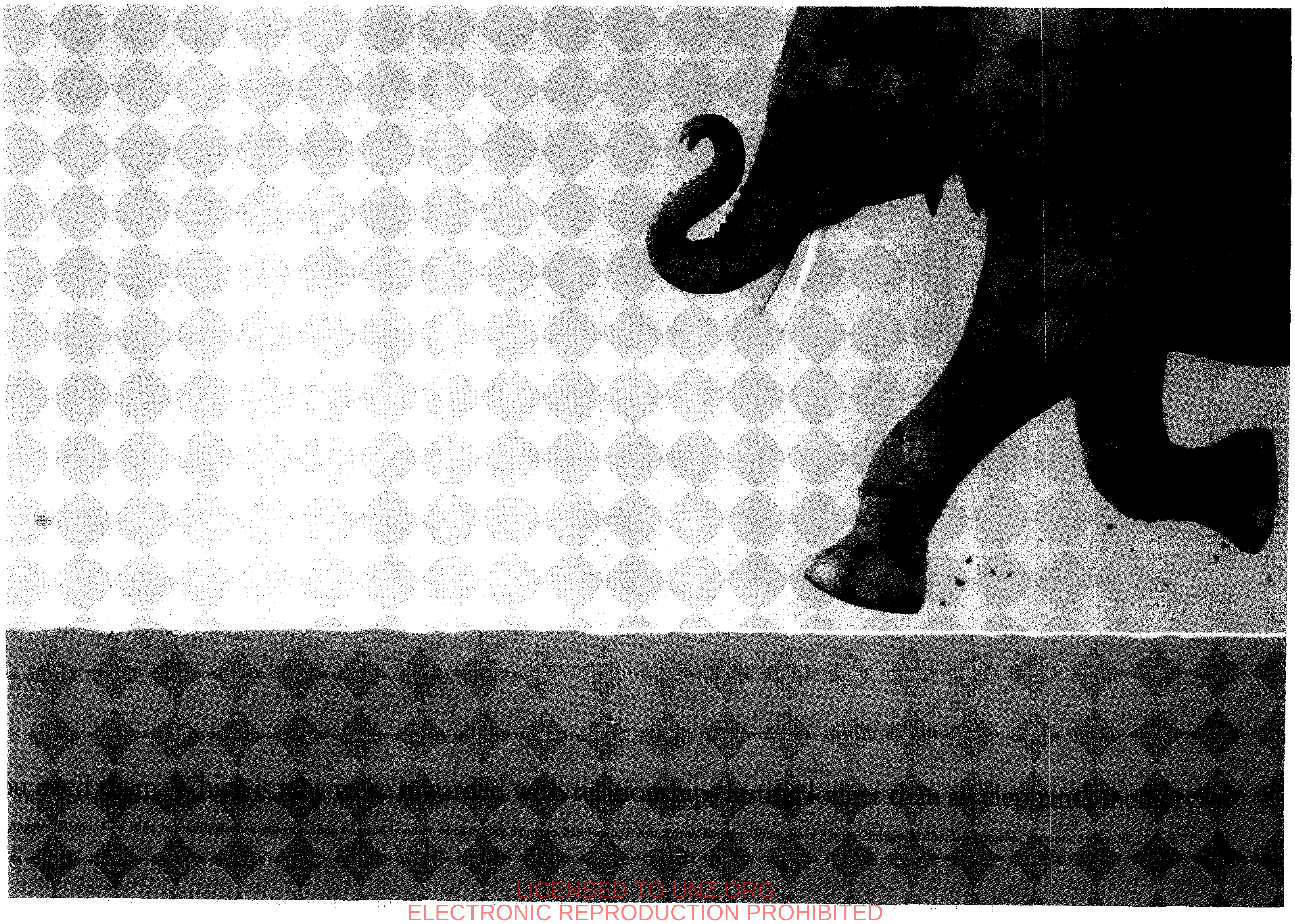
In the interim, I had become a middle-class New York householder and father. I now enjoyed thick walls, fitted cotton sheets, and Pellegrino water on the dinner table; and when I read the Iliad again it troubled me in a different way. The poem's amoral magnificence, the unhoused splendor of air, feasts, and fire, resounded with the savage celebration of physical joy, whose excesses—once the shock wore off—became almost completely intoxicating. Which left one, at the very least, with a considerably diminished satisfaction in sheets and Pellegrino water. Middle-class life was no more than a pleasant compromise compared with

As when along the thundering beach the
  surf of the sea strikes
beat upon beat as the west wind drives it
  onward; far out
cresting first on the open water, it drives
  thereafter
to smash roaring along the dry land, and
  against the rock jut
bending breaks itself into crests spewing
  back the salt wash;
so thronged beat upon beat the Danaans'
  close battalions
steadily into battle, with each of the lords
  commanding
his own men.

(IV, 422-29)

I don't mean to imply that the Iliad's power can be measured by the distress it causes a single middle-class reader. A great work of art is likely to be subversive of almost anyone's peace. The Iliad contests most of our current ideas about what is right and wrong, what is true, what is heroic, and, finally, what is human.

If the West enjoys a moral advantage over other cultures, the advantage lies in placing a high value on the experience of being unsettled. It esteems self-criticism perhaps as much as self-confirmation, and as I walked out of Tayler's last class on the Iliad, watching the students race down the stairs ahead of me, I wondered how the students' future experience of the Western "canon" could possibly conform to the most dire descriptions of the cultural left. And how could the rest of the books, if they were anywhere near as disturbing as the Iliad, serve as William Bennett's bulwark against disorder? My experience left me dismayed by the use both left and right were making of "the canon." Was Columbia's—or anyone's—version of the Western classics likely to be a monolith that either simply crushed or "empowered"? Or would the books appear to the students as a porous, unstable tradition, in which the works turned out to be at odds with one another, or even at odds with themselves—less a devouring beast than a snake that twists, writhes, folds back on itself, and occasionally bites its own tail? ♦



A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE SPOILS OF THE GULF WAR

There are hundreds of millions of dollars to be made by whoever wins contracts to rebuild the war-wrecked infrastructure of Kuwait. Two of George Bush's sons and some of his closest former advisers are hoping to be among the first to reap the rewards. Are they trying to cash in on America's military victory?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

On April 14th of this year, former President George Bush, three months out of office, began a three-day visit to the tiny, oil-rich Gulf kingdom of Kuwait, whose leaders view Bush and his senior aides as the saviors of their nation from Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Bush was accompanied on the flight—a Kuwait Airways flight, specially arranged and paid for by the Kuwaiti government—by his wife, Barbara; his sons Neil and Marvin; and a few of those closest to him during his Presidency, among them former Secretary of State James Baker, former White House Chief of Staff John Sununu, and retired Army Lieutenant General Thomas Kelly, who was director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Persian Gulf War. Bush went to Kuwait to receive the nation's highest medal from the Emir, Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, and an honorary degree from its university. His two youngest sons and his former close aides went along to share in the adulation, but stayed on or returned to Kuwait after Bush left. They were there to make money.

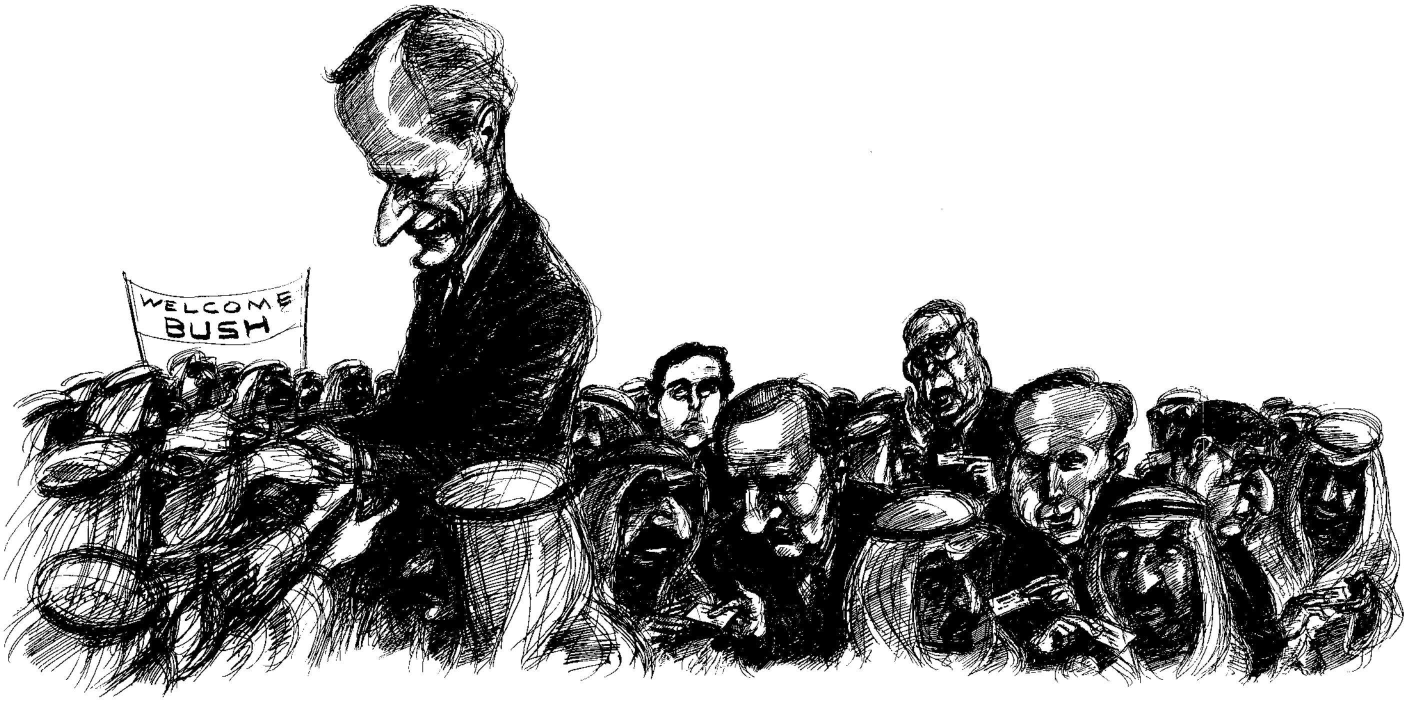
After the former President departed, James Baker began a series of meetings with Kuwait's highest officials, including the Prime Minister, Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, who is the Emir's cousin. Baker, whose family in Texas has long had ties to the energy industry, was there as a consultant to the Enron Corporation, of Houston, America's largest natural-gas-pipeline company. Enron is seeking contracts that could total billions to rebuild bomb-damaged and sabotaged Kuwaiti power plants. General Kelly, whose avuncular manner as the Pentagon's daily briefing officer during the war endeared him to millions of television viewers, joined Enron's board of directors after his retirement, in 1991. He resigned from the board early this year to become a partner in the Wing-Merrill Group, based in Aspen, Colorado—another large energy company, which has joined in a consortium with Enron and other firms to bid on the Kuwaiti power-plant projects—but he is still a consultant to Enron. John Sununu has been retained by Westinghouse, a firm with which he has been closely associated since his days as governor of New Hampshire, to represent its interests around the world, including in Kuwait. Westinghouse is attempting to win a billion-dollar contract for the construction of an extensive "early-warning and barrier defense system" for Kuwait. Neil Bush, the President's second-youngest son, is involved with at least two privately held Houston oil-equipment firms that have attempted to do business, using his name, in Kuwait; he left Kuwait with his father but flew back two weeks later, and made a futile attempt to persuade Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water, the agency that operates the nation's power and desalination plants, to permit him to share in the huge management fees that Enron would be paid to operate Kuwait's reconstructed power plants—if the Enron consortium should win the contract to do so. Marvin Bush stayed in Kuwait to seek contracts in connection with an electronic security fence that was a component of the early-warning defense system; he also was seeking to do business with the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

George Bush's attitude toward these enterprises is not clear. All sources, Kuwaiti and American, agree that he conducted no personal business whatever during the trip, and there is no evidence that he has any financial ties to Kuwait. One of Neil Bush's business associates, who was in Kuwait during the visit in April, recalled that the former President was clearly sensitive to the dangers of doing business in Kuwait: "Neil's father made it very clear that he did not want his sons or anyone in the family getting the spoils of war." And yet Bush was praised by many of his former associates for his loyalty in permitting John Sununu, who is believed to have had financial difficulties, to tag along on the chartered aircraft. Sununu's very public tie to the former President was sure to improve his chances of obtaining contracts, as Bush had to know. George Bush is also an old friend of Kenneth L. Lay, the chairman and chief executive of Enron; Lay was an effective fund-raiser for Bush's Presidential campaign last year and ended up as head of the Host Committee for the 1992 Republican Convention, in Houston. George Bush had on the plane two former subordinates who worked for Lay, James Baker and Tom Kelly; he clearly understood that they were staying behind in Kuwait to share in "the spoils of war." When Neil Bush's associate was asked why Bush had permitted his aides and his son Marvin to stay behind, he could only speculate: "Maybe he didn't think it was his purview to harness them." The associate acknowledged that, after the President left, Baker "was out there shovelling real hard."

The argument can be made, and has, that Baker and the others were pursuing contracts that, were it not for their special connections, would be awarded to Japanese or European concerns. Understood this way, the issue, to put it as Baker once did in justifying American involvement in the Gulf War, is jobs, jobs, jobs. And Bush's sons and his former aides have, of course, broken no laws in attempting to do business in Kuwait.

But they may have damaged established notions of propriety and common sense. It has long been a commonplace of American life that private gains follow from connections made during years of public service; however, there is a sense, too, that certain things—certain types of schemes and deals—are simply beyond the bounds of decency. In seeking contracts to rebuild Kuwait so soon after American men and women risked their lives there—in using their sacrifice as a kind of calling card—haven't Baker, the two Bush sons, and the rest transgressed those bounds?

KUWAIT'S government and business leaders venerate George Bush as the "MAN WHO DREW LINE IN THE SAND," to quote the headline of a flattering biographical piece that was published in the Kuwait *Times* the day before the Bush visit. Kuwaitis—even those in opposition to the country's present leadership—see themselves as being in Bush's debt. During his visit, for example, private citizens flocked to the various official functions and dinners, where they patiently stood in line for hours to present Bush and his wife with gifts both symbolic and expensive, including watches and necklaces valued at untold thousands of dollars. The largesse, as many Kuwaitis told me during my six-day visit there in July, extended to Bush's children and his former aides, who were given Cartier watches by the al-Sabah family.



George Bush went to Kuwait for plaudits. Some of his entourage (Marvin Bush, James Baker, Thomas Kelly, Neil Bush, and John Sununu) stayed on to do business.

VICTOR JUHASZ

George Bush is now a private citizen, and, obviously, is no longer obligated to turn over to the government any gifts from foreign officials valued at more than two hundred and twenty-five dollars, as federal law requires executive branch officials to do. There was little criticism in the American press of the willingness of a former President to accept so many presents from the citizens of a foreign nation. Most American newspapers paid scant attention to the trip, and the few American journalists who were assigned to Kuwait during the visit seemed to view the gift-giving as a human-interest story. Repeated telephone calls in early August seeking comment from former President Bush's office in Houston regarding the gifts elicited no response, but in late August a woman who answered the telephone in the office said that the Bush staff had spent four months cataloguing the gifts he had received. That process was concluded two weeks ago, she said, and all the gifts had been removed to the Bush Presidential Library at Texas A & M. Asked whether the gifts would be sold to help finance the library, the woman—who described herself as a volunteer—initially responded "that's not clear." She subsequently said that the gifts would be put on display in the library. Whatever the final outcome, one might fairly conclude that Bush's acceptance of so many gifts during his stay in Kuwait removed any restraints on the activities of his sons and former aides.

Telephone calls to Neil and Marvin Bush seeking comment about their dealings in Kuwait produced no direct response. Neil Bush eventually informed me, through an intermediary, that he has not spoken to the press since 1990, when federal regulators formally accused him of negligence and conflict-of-interest violations in connection with his involvement in the highly publicized Silverado Banking, Savings and Loan Association scandal; Neil was a director of the Colorado bank when it made millions of dollars in high-risk loans. His brother Marvin similarly relayed word that he would not return a telephone call; he was quoted as claiming that he had not spoken to a reporter for twelve years. Both men said, through their intermediaries, that they had no business dealings in Kuwait.

James Baker would not be interviewed for this article, but he did acknowledge, through an aide, that he had remained in Kuwait for two days after the Bush visit to conduct business as a consultant to Enron, which is one of two bidders seeking to rebuild a government-owned four-hundred-megawatt power plant at Shuaiba, an industrial zone just south of Kuwait City. The power plant was destroyed during the Iraqi occupation, in 1990, and Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water is now considering a much disputed proposal to privatize all of Kuwait's state-owned power plants. Theoretically, Enron could win as much as four billion dollars in Kuwaiti contracts to rebuild three power plants and operate them over a twenty-year period.

Margaret Tutwiler, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs during Baker's tenure as Secretary of State, and whose public-relations firm now represents Baker, quoted him as saying, in essence, that his business activities in Kuwait were undertaken in the name of America. "He believes that to fairly make the case for American companies against foreign competition is a positive, not a negative," Ms. Tutwiler said, "and that Kuwait—or any other country, for that matter—should make its decision based on the merits and its own economic interests, and he would not suggest otherwise." Baker's suggestion that he was acting on behalf of American business could perhaps be taken at face value if he were still Secretary of State, but his statement ignores an obvious possibility: he was in Kuwait to capitalize on his leadership in the Gulf War.

One target of Kuwaiti adulation who chose not to do so—and is willing to talk about it—is H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Army general who rose to fame as the commander-in-chief of the war, which ended with the liberation of Kuwait in February of 1991. Schwarzkopf, who retired from the Army in September of 1991, is not averse to making a profit from his public role: he has since written, with a co-author, a best-selling autobiography, and is said to charge sixty thousand dollars to make a speech; he has set up a business office near his home, in Tampa, and has joined the boards of two corporations, neither of which, he said, have interests in the Middle East. He has consistently turned down highly lucrative offers to go to work in Kuwait.

"I've had four or five different groups come to me," Schwarzkopf recalled in a telephone interview in June. "One, looking to sell a large defense system to Kuwait, wanted me to be C.E.O. and offered me a hundred and fifty million dollars to do it." Other firms have offered commissions ranging in the dozens of millions if he would travel to Kuwait to make their case. "I told them all no," the general said. "I wouldn't do it, for two reasons. One, I had a special relationship of trust with the Kuwaiti leadership, and, two, I felt that I represented five hundred and forty-one thousand American men and women who went over there, and not some private companies. The bottom line is that you've got to sit down and say to yourself, 'Hey, what do I get out of this?' My integrity may be up for sale, but nobody's come up with the right price yet."

Schwarzkopf has a reputation for speaking his mind, and in the past he has talked frankly with me about significant operational and intelligence failures during the American invasion of Grenada. He agreed to talk on the record only after learning that I had information about the offers made to him to do business in Kuwait and after it was established that none of the American companies involved would be named.

In a second telephone interview, in late July, Schwarzkopf said he was aware that some of his former colleagues in the military and some former Bush Administration officials had sought business contracts in Kuwait. "In the Arab world, your position in the government may get you through the door, but it's the personal relationship that gets you the contract," he said. "I've developed that personal relationship in Kuwait. I know that all I've got to do is go to the Emir and say, 'Hey, I want you to do this,' and he will. There are people who have made and use such special connections, and I don't begrudge them. But don't ask me to betray the trust these people have in me. I won't do it. American men and women were willing to die in Kuwait. Why should I profit from their sacrifice?"

Kuwait, with its huge oil reserves—third-largest in the world—and its overwhelming gratitude to the United States for its liberation, is an especially ripe target for American defense firms. Two billion-dollar deals are being negotiated right now, Schwarzkopf said—one involving the proposed early-warning and barrier defense system for Kuwait and the other a new top-to-bottom management structure for the Kuwaiti government. American firms "literally wanted me to go over to Kuwait and say, 'I want you to do this with this company,'" he said. "There's no doubt they"—the Kuwaiti government—"would do it. There would easily have been hundreds of millions of dollars in commissions for me personally." Other proposals involved postwar reconstruction work, such as the dredging of Kuwait's harbors. "I was offered ten to twenty million dollars in commissions to fly over, see the Emir, and make the

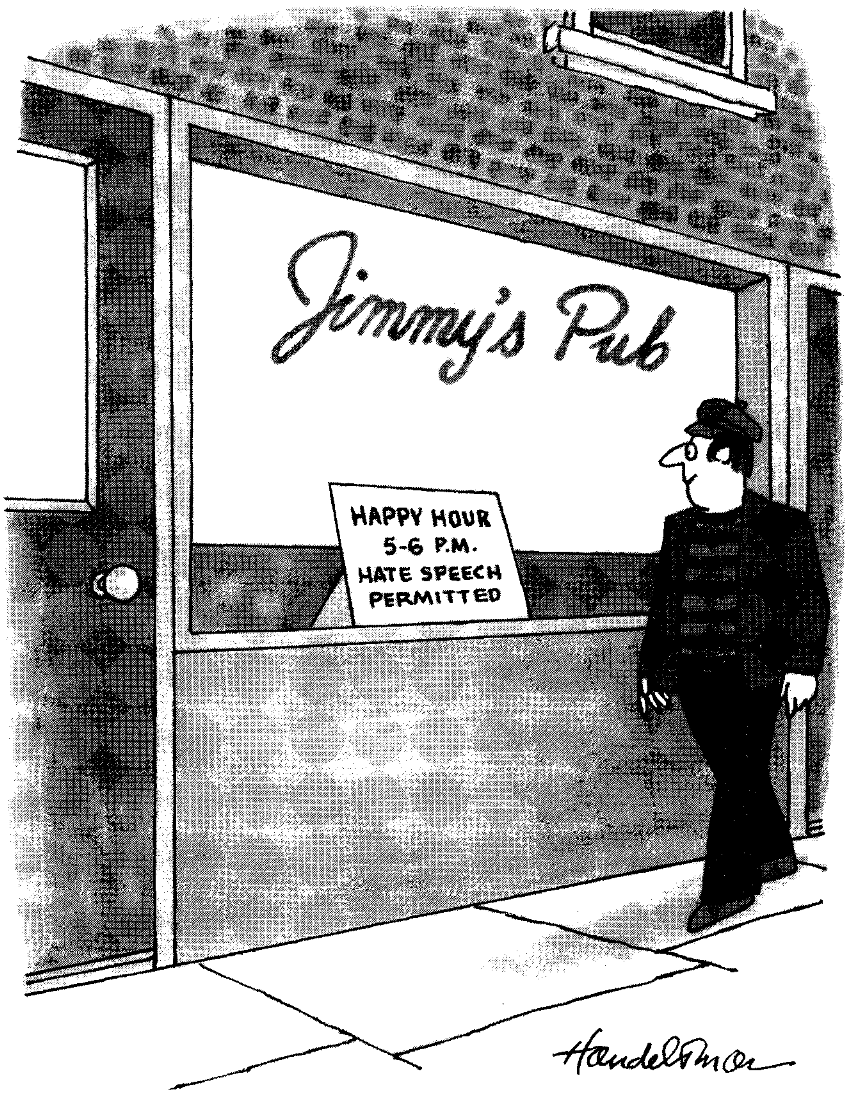
"There was an eighth dwarf, named Scuzzy, but we killed him."

deal. I couldn't do it. If I had been interested in making money, I wouldn't have stayed in the military for forty years," Schwarzkopf continued. "Hell, I don't even know how to spend it. Between the book and making lectures, I've made more money than I ever thought I would. Sure, it's nice to leave something for the kids, but money is not that important to me. If someone came up to me and had something that was wonderful for the Kuwaiti people, I'd say, 'Hey, let's do it.' But you don't sell yourself to everybody."

ENRON'S involvement in Kuwait has its beginnings in the six-month occupation of the country, when Iraqi troops destroyed a power plant known as Shuaiba North. The plant supplied about five per cent of Kuwait's daily power needs, but the Ministry of Electricity and Water, or MEW, sought bids on its rebuilding and possible expansion, as part of a long-range plan—still very much in the planning stage—to begin privatizing government-owned-and-operated industries in the areas of energy and communications. A major incentive for turning over the rebuilding of Shuaiba to private companies was economic: homes and businesses in Kuwait had been ransacked by the Iraqis, and its oil fields had been left aflame, resulting in billions of dollars of lost oil revenue. Getting private industry to finance the new plant and then run it was an obvious solution to the Kuwaiti government's serious cash shortage.

There was no urgency, however, in terms of the nation's immediate power needs, or even of its projected needs. Kuwait still had four power plants in operation when the war ended, and there was far less demand for power then than there had been before the war, primarily because of a huge drop in population stemming from the brutal ouster of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, who had come to be viewed by Kuwaitis as having been too coöperative with the Iraqis.

Yet another reason for going slow on Shuaiba was that Kuwait had signed contracts before the war with Japanese and Turkish firms for the construction of a twenty-four-hundred-megawatt power plant at Subiya, north of Kuwait City—six times as large as the proposed new plant at Shuaiba. Why not go ahead with the plant already under contract?


Jimmy's Pub
HAPPY HOUR 5-6 P.M. HATE SPEECH PERMITTED
Handelsman

One argument for permitting the Enron consortium to rebuild Shuaiba, many Kuwaiti government and business officials acknowledge, was a desire to reward the Bush Administration for its support in the war. "We Kuwaitis went through something horrible," Dr. Ahmad al-Khatib, a liberal member of Kuwait's newly energized National Assembly, told me. "You can't know the feeling of a refugee—of losing your control. And then comes President Bush, who liberates Kuwait. He is the man. We feel very grateful to him, to the United States government, to Bush as a friend, so I don't think Kuwaitis would object to giving any money to Bush, or feel embarrassed about giving him anything. Kuwaitis feel very insecure. If America takes the hand away from Kuwait, Saddam will come right back."

Jamal A. al-Shehab, the managing partner of a law firm in Kuwait City that works closely with a large American law firm, explained to me that Kuwait's sense of gratitude toward Bush and his associates had its roots in Kuwait's Bedouin culture. "If somebody makes a favor for you, you reward him," he said. "If you make a good gift to the son, it means for the father. Also, in our culture we cannot understand the difference between a leader as a man or a leader as a President. What Bush does as President is viewed as what Bush does as a man."

A more pragmatic view was expressed by Saud Mohamed al-Osaimi, Kuwait's former foreign minister, who is now the chairman of Kuwait National Industries, a building-materials company that holds a five-per-cent investment in the Shuaiba consortium. Al-Osaimi asked rhetorically, "Suppose the United States owns twenty-five per cent of our oil interests? We would not need an act of Congress to go to war"—in case of further Iraqi aggression. He added that he and another prominent Kuwaiti businessman, Abdul Aziz M. T. Alghanim, who also became an investor in the consortium, had been urging the privatization of Shuaiba many months before Enron was involved. "We were surprised when the company nominated Baker and Tom Kelly as consultants," he said. "We have nothing to do with their appointments."

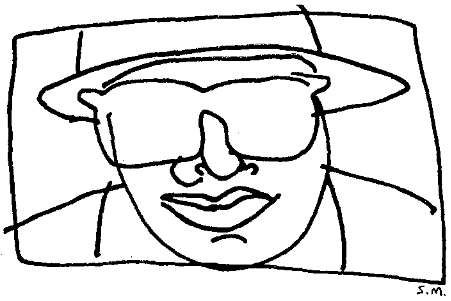
Al-Osaimi acknowledged that he, along with Alghanim and other investors in the Shuaiba proposal, had held a private breakfast meeting with Baker right after the Bush visit. "When we met Mr. Baker and Tom Kelly, we never spoke about the business at all," the former foreign minister said. "We knew they had no idea. We discussed the liberation, et cetera." Perhaps nettled by questions about why the Kuwaitis would form a consortium with Americans and not the Japanese, he went on, sharply, "Can you tell me what the Japanese did to liberate Kuwait? And they have as many financial interests here as anyone else. If you have sympathy, you have sympathy with those who help you. What's wrong with the idea? We're establishing good relations with an advanced technological society. It's to our advantage. We're educating our children in the United States and Europe. Why should we ask them to come home and work with Japanese?"

James Baker signed on as a consultant to Enron in February, a month after leaving office. At the time, Enron's chairman, Kenneth Lay, announced that Baker would be free to invest personally in any projects that he developed. Baker has also become a partner in the Washington office of a prominent Houston law firm, and is partner and senior counsel to the Carlyle Group, a fast-growing investment bank in Washington that is dominated by many former Reagan and Bush Administration officials, including former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci and Richard Darman, the former director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Baker had immediate success with Enron. By June, he was involved in negotiations on joint-venture proposals for the construction of power plants and natural-gas pipelines in Qatar, Turkey, and Turkmenistan. In Kuwait, Enron now holds a twenty-one-per-cent investment in the Kuwait Electricity Company, a consortium whose other holders include Wing-Merrill and nine Kuwaiti firms, including the Kuwait Finance House, which has a twenty-six-per-cent interest.

This consortium is now in intense competition with a consortium led by Deutsche Babcock, of Germany, a leading European energy firm, for the right to build the four-hundred-megawatt power plant at Shuaiba. The project, according to officials of the Ministry of Electricity and Water, is to cost six hundred million dollars. But Abdul Aziz Alghanim, who personally holds a nine-per-cent investment in the Enron consortium, acknowledged in an interview that the final construction price could conceivably reach a billion dollars. Alghanim, who belongs to one of the most prominent families in the Kuwait business community, said that he had visited the Emir early this year to lobby for the Shuaiba project. The Emir, Alghanim recalled, "said it is a good idea," and arranged for a series of meetings with officials of MEW. "The project will go ahead," Alghanim predicted, "and the ministry has not yet decided if it wants to go for four hundred, six hundred, or a thousand megawatts." Furthermore, he said, the ministry may decide to go ahead with the construction of the twenty-four-hundred-megawatt plant at Subiya as well—an undertaking that could cost three billion dollars more, and one that the Enron consortium could play a role in. (The Japanese and Turkish contracts for Subiya have been reopened.) It is possible, the businessman said optimistically, that the consortium could end up doing more than four billion dollars' worth of business in Kuwait.

Diane Bazelides, the vice-president of public relations for Enron, refused to disclose James Baker's compensation agreement, describing him as one of many consultants for the company. "We have nothing to disclose on James Baker," she said. But Enron's 1993 proxy statement, made public at the annual stockholders' meeting in Houston, on May 4th, shows that General Kelly, like Baker, a consultant, is to be paid a thousand dollars per megawatt for each of the first five hundred megawatts of each successfully negotiated commercial-plant project, and five hundred dollars a megawatt after that. He thus stands to earn four hundred thousand dollars in fees if the Enron consortium wins the bidding for the construction of Shuaiba. If Shuaiba were expanded to a thousand-megawatt plant—as Alghanim, with his high-level government connections, claims is possible—the retired general would earn seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. If the Enron consortium were also to win a contract for the Subiya facility—admittedly, a much less likely possibility—General Kelly would get an additional one million four hundred and fifty thousand dollars in fees. All these fees would be in addition to the money he would earn as a partner in Wing-Merrill, which has a 4.6-per-cent investment in the consortium.



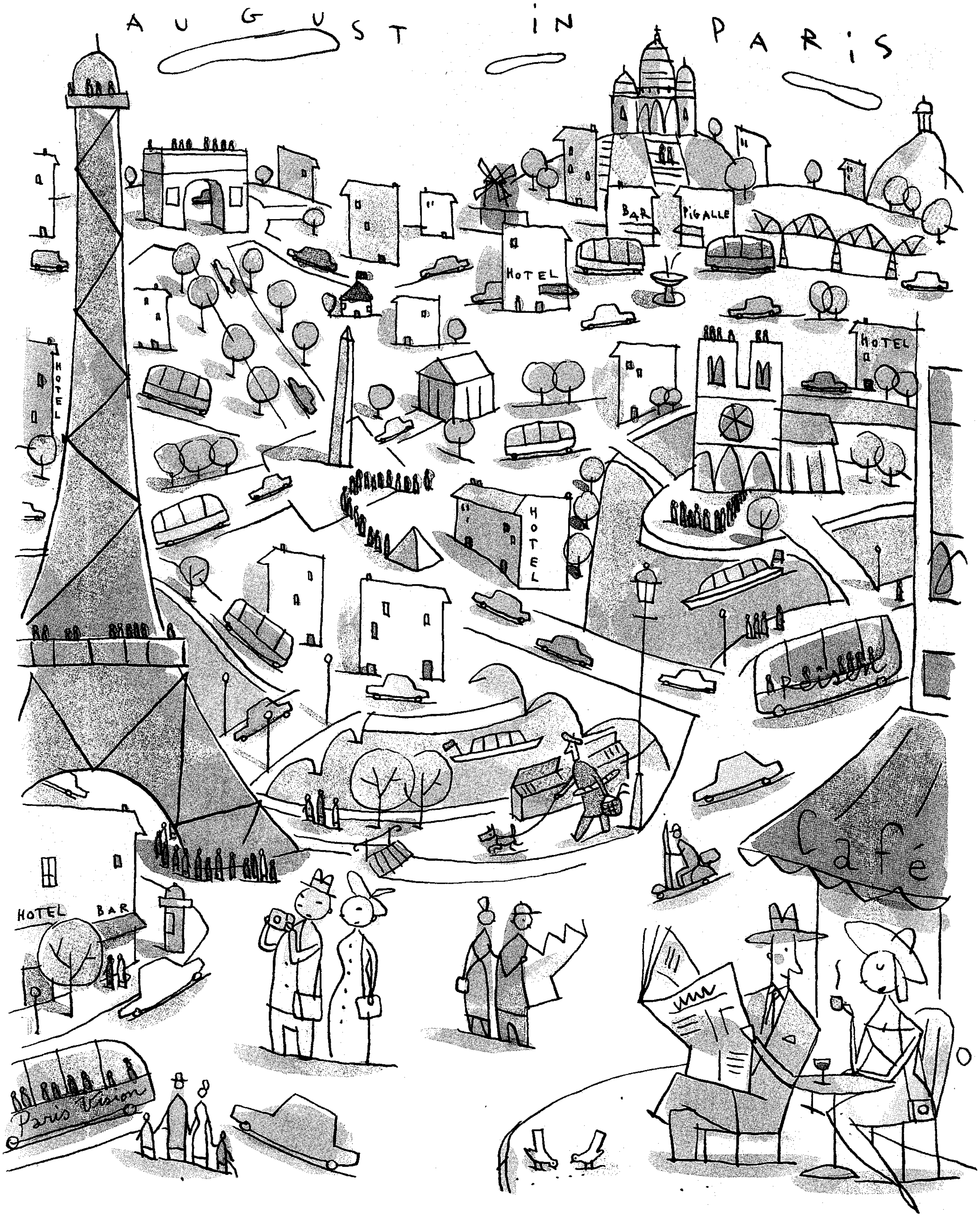
Kelly disputed the suggestion that his involvement in the Kuwait project was a payback for his role in winning the Gulf War, and was unrelated to any specific expertise in the energy field. "This is my full-time job, and I've worked my ass off learning all I could about it," the General said in a telephone interview. "I very honestly believe that the fact I was involved in the war doesn't cut any slack at all. If it did, we'd have the contract by now." As for the trip with Bush, Kelly said he was "flattered" to be asked to fly along. "Both Jim Baker and I were meticulous in not meeting with anybody until Bush left," he said. "We told them"—Kuwaiti MEW officials—"that if we don't win on merit we don't begin to work."

Reached by telephone, Kenneth Lay, of Enron, was unabashed about his having sent Baker and Kelly to Kuwait. "Is it bad taste for American companies to do business with Kuwait? Did we fight the war so American companies could profit from it? Absolutely not. Having not done that, is there any reason American companies shouldn't profit from the war in Kuwait?"

Lay, who has received praise from Wall Street for his aggressive management of Enron, emphatically defended his hiring practices. He asked, "What's wrong with hiring former American officials to encourage investments any-

ARTIST AT LARGE BY FRANÇOIS AVRIL

AUGUST IN PARIS


BAR
PIGALLE
HOTEL
HOTEL
HOTEL
HOTEL
Parisien
Café
HOTEL
BAR
Paris Vision

Find the Parisian.

"We find the solar system incompatible with other systems."

where in the world? Jim Baker has given us some very helpful advice to be more competitive in the world. I ask you, what in the hell is wrong with that?"

One indirect answer to Lay's question came during an interview in Kuwait with a senior official of the Kuwait Finance House, a major partner in the Enron consortium. Queried about Tom Kelly's expertise in the power-plant business, the Kuwaiti pointedly picked up a copy of the retired general's résumé and flipped it to a reporter. It described Kelly's military assignments during his long and distinguished Army career. There was nothing in the record to indicate any expertise in energy issues. Concerning James Baker, the financier said, "We are interested that he is Baker and that he did a great favor for us, and so let's listen to him."

The Finance House official added that one of Baker's functions in his April meetings with the Prime Minister and senior officials of the Ministry of Electricity and Water was to try to close the Shuaiba power-plant deal. "If you have good relations with the ministers, it will make life easier," he explained. "We feel we should have it by now." The financier made it clear that he had a personal reason for wishing that the project were already completed: he did not like the attitude of the Americans. "They are taking it for granted—taking it easy," he said, with obvious bitterness, of the Enron negotiating team. "They think Kuwaitis are Arabs who do not understand business. I believe the Americans have a view that Gulf State people are not educated, don't read, and don't know about business."

JOHN SUNUNU, who was described by one Kuwaiti newspaper during the Bush visit to Kuwait as the former President's strongman, seemed apprehensive when asked in a telephone interview about his business dealings in Kuwait. "I waited a year before I did business anywhere," he said more than once during the interview. "I don't want to comment about anyone else. I understand the sensitivity. I don't know what other advisers are doing there, but I don't think anyone is doing anything aggressive."

Sununu, who resigned as Bush's chief of staff in 1991 amid highly public allegations that he violated White House rules on the personal use of government aircraft and limousines, now divides his time between running his corporate-consulting firm and serving as one of the hosts for CNN's nightly talk show "Crossfire." He acknowledged that he was a paid adviser to Westinghouse around the world and in Kuwait, where Westinghouse is avidly bidding on Kuwait's billion-dollar early-warning defense system. But Sununu denied any involvement with or even knowledge of the early-warning system and said he'd returned to Kuwait in early July only "to help a couple of charitable institutions." He had not sought business in Kuwait, he said, adding, "I don't do much for Westinghouse there." Sununu further acknowledged, in response to a question, that, while in Kuwait, he consulted with officials of Kuwait University on plans for its expansion. "The Kuwaitis raised the issue with me and asked me to help them," he said. Asked why the Kuwaitis chose to consult with him on education issues, he responded, "Why? Because I was there. I have simply been responsive to requests. It doesn't mean I wouldn't—perhaps in the fall—go back. I haven't made a business trip to Kuwait—yet."

One of Sununu's colleagues—or competitors, perhaps—in the hunt for contracts tied to Kuwait's early-warning defense system is Marvin Bush. A few weeks before his father's trip to Kuwait, Marvin, whose business investments include a stake in a number of Blockbuster Video franchises, was hired by Murphy & Associates, a consulting firm in Washington operated by retired Admiral Daniel J. Murphy, who served as Vice-President George Bush's chief of staff in the Reagan years. Murphy's firm also made a business arrangement with

Muhammad al-Duaij, the young son of a wealthy Kuwaiti family: he was to serve as the contact with the Defense Ministry. The goal was to represent American defense firms in the bidding for the electronic fence. "Marvin was my consultant," Murphy said in an interview. "He worked for me. He's a big name in Kuwait." Murphy was not asked to join the President and his entourage on the chartered flight to Kuwait, but he did manage to be in the country at the same time.

"I talked to his father before I asked Marvin to come with me," Murphy recalled. "He's so concerned about his boys' getting into misunderstandings in the business world. He was very concerned." Murphy assuaged the former President's concern, he said, and Marvin, once his father's plane had left Kuwait, became very active. "Marvin's an investor," Murphy said. "He provides investments for people. I know he was trying to do other business."

Marvin Bush's other attempted business dealings in Kuwait remain unknown, although one of his American associates did say that they were in the defense area. While Marvin was in Kuwait, he also paid a visit to senior officials of the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

Another of Marvin's business associates, also an American, said, "Marvin didn't do anything wrong," and added, "He basically thought there was a chance to make a buck. There was an opportunity. They're good kids, and scared to death of their father—and mother."

The full scope of brother Neil's business dealings in Kuwait could not be learned, either. He is, however, involved in at least two Houston oil-related firms, Link Group and the Ultraflote Corporation, in which he is a partner. Using Neil's name, both firms have recently attempted to get business contracts in Kuwait. One Kuwaiti oil executive, whom I interviewed during my visit in mid-July, told me that a sales representative of Ultraflote, which manufactures antipollution devices for oil fields, had whispered to him that Neil Bush "was a partner" and had said, "He was trying to get business." Stephen M. Hall, a vice-president of Ultraflote, subsequently acknowledged that Neil Bush was indeed a partner in the firm. "We're trying to do some business," Hall said in a telephone interview from Houston. "There's no conflict of interest. We're just capitalizing on whatever good feelings exist"—between the Bush family and the government of Kuwait. Officials at the Link Group did not return telephone calls.

Neil was doing far more than merely trying to help two Houston firms obtain business, according to American and European financial analysts who have been directly involved in studying the energy issue in Kuwait. These analysts, who have direct knowledge, report that Neil, upon returning to Kuwait in late April, attempted to make a deal involving the highly profitable management aspects of the Ministry of Electricity and Water's power-plant deals. The financial analysts said that Neil, operating out of the International Hotel in Kuwait City, was proposing a complicated arrangement that, in the end, would provide for commissions to be paid. Those who have seen the draft contract said that it called for a new company, owned jointly by the foreign and the local members of the Enron consortium, to be established

"The ones just out of law school are especially frolicsome."

in Kuwait. That new company, in turn, would be owned in part by another new company, set up, for tax purposes, in the Caribbean or some other tax haven. The offshore firm would have various owners, in Europe and elsewhere, one of which would be a company in which Neil Bush had an interest. The offshore firm would then contract with its owners for various services, and each would receive a percentage of the profits for the management of Shuaiba and also a commission on some percentage of the funds that Enron received. "So if I were putting the deal together and you asked me if I got a commission, I'd say no," one financial expert explained. "Because I don't have a commission directly on the main job—I have a commission paid by the main foreign contractor. Basically, Kuwait pays the Kuwait company, which is owned in part by a Caribbean company, a fee to manage, and the Caribbean company then contracts out to its owners for service. And between those owners there's a commission paid. As a legal matter, it's none of Kuwait's business. No commission was paid in Kuwait." The scheme was ingenious, the analyst said: "If you looked at the contracts, how in the hell would you know Bush was in it?"

The proposal was killed, the analyst added. "The people who looked at it told the Kuwaitis, 'Why would you do such a thing? It's unnecessarily complicated.' Neil was pushing it. He was discussing it in April in the International Hotel. He had the contracts with him." The analyst said that at one point he and his colleagues suspected that Under-Secretary Abdulla M. al-Minayes, of Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water, had been put under direct pressure from Neil Bush. Asked during an interview in Kuwait about his contact with Neil Bush, al-Minayes would say only, "Neil and Marvin were involved in investments, not to do with Shuaiba. They came as anybody can come to me here and explain his position." He added that the business dealings revolved around a company in Texas.

If the details of Neil Bush's unsuccessful proposal remain imprecise, there was enough general knowledge about it inside Kuwait's banking and financial circles to trouble visiting Americans. "I felt sleazy," one American banking official recalled. "It embarrassed me as an American. Kuwaitis were snickering after dinner. We take such a self-righteous view in international business: 'We don't do family deals, and we don't take tips.' And then, during a period of celebration and congratulation, to have the President's children and the Secretary of State come to Kuwait to get handouts . . ."

THE future of Shuaiba and the role of James Baker and Enron in that future have become a hotly debated subject in Kuwait. Many of the prominent Kuwaitis who agreed to be interviewed during my visit were reluctant to express their doubts on the record, but much doubt was voiced. And there were a few who were open in their criticism of the Emir and his cousin Sheikh Saad al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, for what they saw as gift-giving, and critical, too, of the former President and his family for gift-taking.

One prominent Kuwaiti who is deeply involved in Kuwait's oil business argued that "if Kuwait were serious about rewarding America for its support in the Gulf War, "we should have come forward after the hurricane in Homestead"—the United States Air Force base heavily hit last year by Hurricane Andrew—and contributed funds "to show we haven't forgotten the blood spilled by the United States." There is a leadership group in Kuwait, the oil executive added, obviously referring to the Emir and his immediate family, that

ROGUE HYDRANT, AUGUST

Morning. The sun gleams wickedly on chrome:
neuralgic intimations for the day.
Up from those stone vaults where the boiler men
in beaked quartz masks wield their erratic torches
on mudlegs, coils, and firebrick erupts
this vengeful glossolalia, to scour
a rank pot liquor from the granite curb
(turds, chewing gum, butts, sputum, wilted flowers),
led from upstate through locomotive-size
conduits, with the thumb of gravity
pressing and pressing on a glassy core.

A wino from the traffic island puts
insouciant lips down to the furious stream
(sixty-five p.s.i. through ductile iron),
his thirst, for once, not dropsical enough
to quench the music of this braided storm.
Oh to lie down, he thinks, and feed upon
this foggy clout and, as at some old loom,
study the gauzy cadence of release,
weaving itself forever fresh and new,
cross-rhythmed, flashing high and low (just like
that nearby box-top game of three-card monte):

I *will* lead me beside stiller waters than these,
where chance is pastured greenly—and swoons closer.
Too close! It rolls him off, with crystal knives
break-dancing all around. But, for one instant,
he's balanced on the cusp of pleasure's tooth,
buried a hundred years beneath the pavement;
then grovels back through oscillating rings
of perfect clarity, through chlorinated
precincts of freshness, to the muggy street.
He wakes, stands, and vaguely wanders away
just as the water-blue squad car arrives.

—KARL KIRCHWEY

"believes that one way to achieve its goal is by association with people who have done us favors." He went on, "They also believe that the people will not object. Bush and Baker are very popular in Kuwait, and they"—the Kuwaiti leaders—"are using their friendship with Bush and reflecting it on Bush. It has nothing to do with Bush; he just happens to be the vehicle."

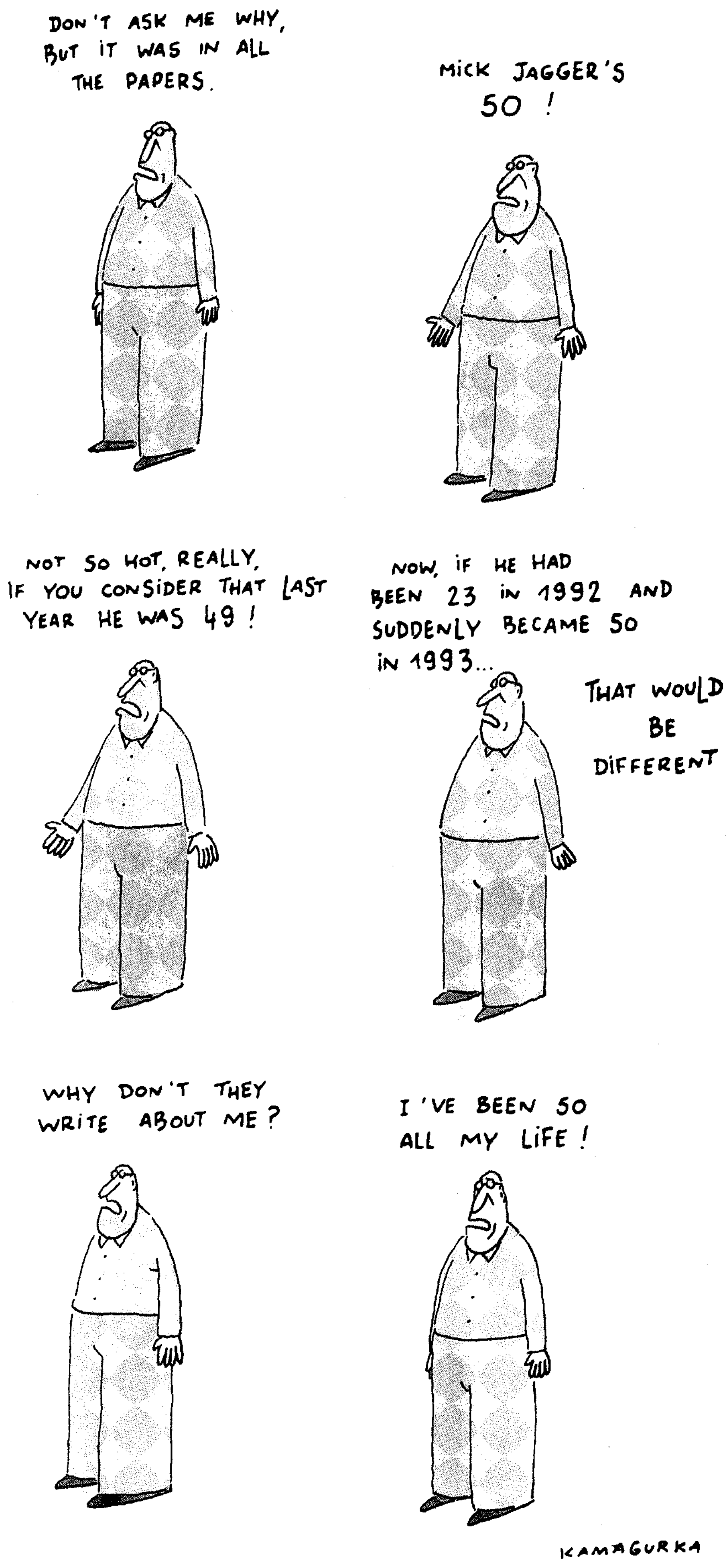
Muhammad al-Sager, the editor-in-chief of the independent daily *Al-Qabas*, made essentially the same point in an interview. He remains grateful for the liberation of Kuwait, but notes that "George Bush didn't order his army to liberate Kuwait for the sake of the Kuwaitis—it was in the interests of his country."

THE old ways are represented most emphatically by the ruling al-Sabah family of Kuwait, many of whose leading members, including the Emir and the Prime Minister, ignominiously fled their country in the early days of the Iraqi invasion, and returned only after the liberation. The resulting loss in popularity and esteem has led to tension over political control of the state, with the influential business community and the parliament increasingly in opposition—loyal, thus far—to the government's policies. One potential flash point is the al-Sabah family's continued direct control of the annual billions of dollars from the nation's oil revenues—a control that has existed without serious challenge since the nineteen-thirties, when oil production began.

The proposed privatization of Shuaiba thus plays a large part in today's political tensions, because the al-Sabahs have traditionally moderated discontent over their control of oil by redistributing oil profits, in part, to the citizenry. Electrical power, for example, is heavily subsidized by the state, with individuals in Kuwait paying about half a cent per kilowatt hour. (The rate in New York City is fourteen cents per kilowatt hour.) There are officials in Kuwait City who fear that putting some of Kuwait's electrical power in the hands of an American company could lead, over the twenty-year life of the proposed contract, to a dramatic rise in government subsidies or—what is more alarming to the business community—increased consumer costs. It has not gone unnoticed in Kuwait that Enron's competitor

ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK BY KAMAGURKA

MICK

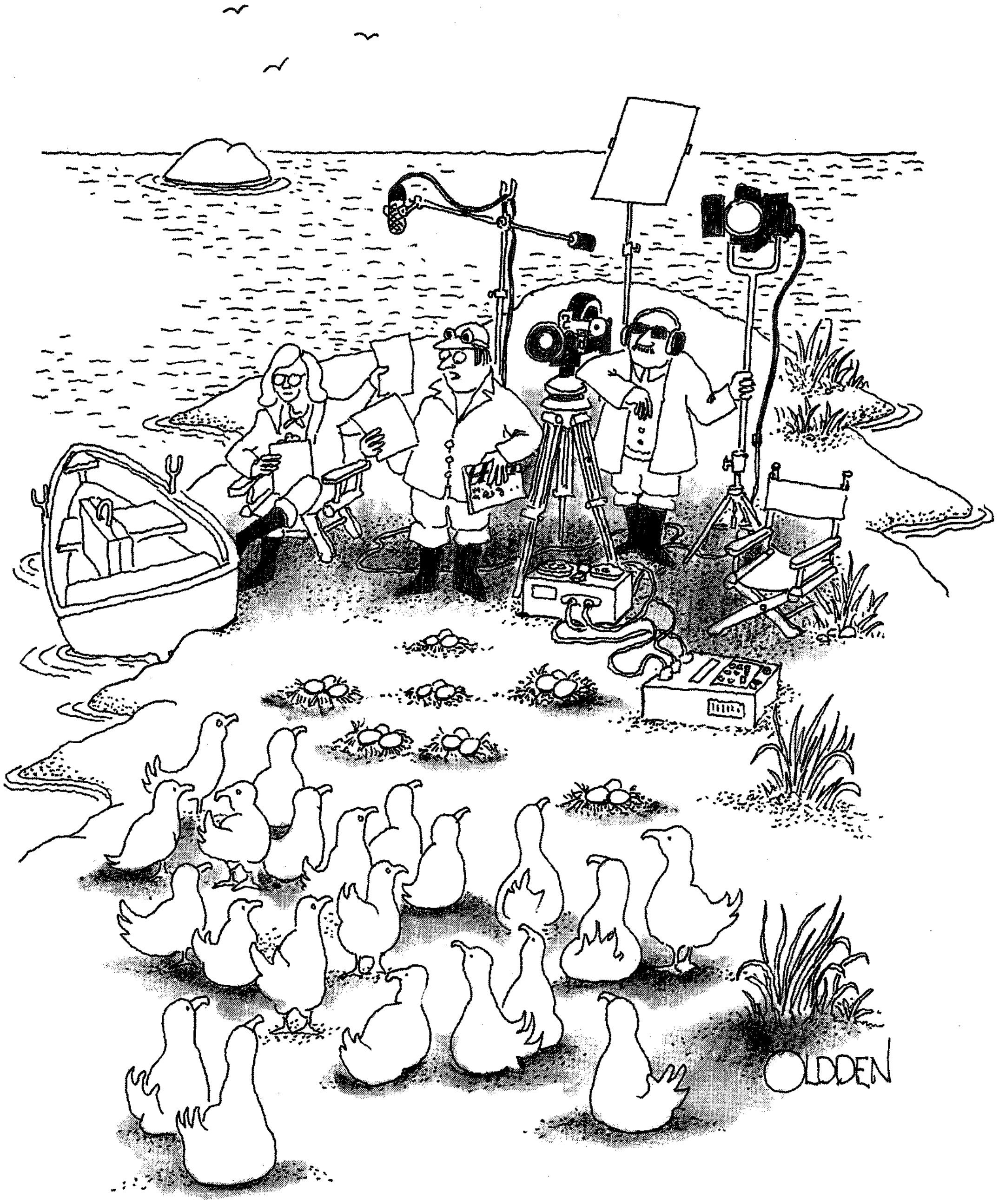

DON'T ASK ME WHY, BUT IT WAS IN ALL THE PAPERS.
MICK JAGGER'S 50 !
NOT SO HOT, REALLY, IF YOU CONSIDER THAT LAST YEAR HE WAS 49 !
NOW, IF HE HAD BEEN 23 IN 1992 AND SUDDENLY BECAME 50 IN 1993...
THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT !
WHY DON'T THEY WRITE ABOUT ME ?
I'VE BEEN 50 ALL MY LIFE !
KAMAGURKA

for Shuaiba, the consortium led by Deutsche Babcock, has proposed delivering electricity for six cents a kilowatt hour, almost fifty per cent less than Enron's estimated delivery price, which is eleven cents a kilowatt hour.

In a private report published early this year, the Petroleum Finance Company, an oil-industry research group based in Washington, warned, "The struggle for control of the state that is under way in Kuwait depends to a large part on whether the ruling family remains a cohesive force and whether the opposition groups can maintain their current unity." A key rallying point for the opposition, the study added, was "incompetence and/or fraudulent behavior" on the part of the al-Sabahs. A senior analyst for the research group, speaking anonymously, depicted the proposed privatization of Kuwait's power industry as "an opportunity for the nation to make new investments for the twenty-first century," and went on to say, "If they get bogged down in more personalized deals, they won't be taken seriously. The regime must start acting like an honest broker—and not like it's the good old days. The opposition wants the government to pursue rational and nondiscriminatory policies—the notion of a level playing field, with rules and regulations."

In early March, the World Bank was retained by the beleaguered Ministry of Electricity and Water to conduct an independent evaluation of privatization. That study was still under way as of late summer, but some World Bank officials are known to be skeptical of the need for Kuwait to rebuild the bombed-out Shuaiba plant. These officials have argued that the Kuwaiti government should sign no individual contracts—as with the Enron consortium—but seek across-the-board bids on the privatization of its entire electrical-power system. "Why do they want to go ahead with Shuaiba?" one World Bank official asked, noting that Kuwait has more than enough electrical power to meet its immediate needs, especially with its war-diminished population. There is also concern about the heavily politicized aspects of the Enron proposal. "It's an old pattern," one official said. "Use a great big public contract to do some favors."

These are not happy days at the highest levels of the Kuwait Ministry of Electricity and Water, where Abdulla al-Minayes, the under-Secretary, repeatedly insisted in an interview that the future of Shuaiba would not be influenced by American persuasion. "Neil was here . . . and Mr. Baker came," al-Minayes said. "John Sununu met the minister [of MEW] in the interests of Westinghouse and other American companies in Kuwait. Marvin came later, with something else." Still, his agency would not be moved by American pressure, al-Minayes said, especially since Enron's proposed price per kilow[illegible] turned out to be "higher than we expected." Another issue has to do with turning over day-to-day management of the power station to Enron. "We think privatization may give us less service," al-Minayes said. "Whenever there's a problem with power, we move. We also take safety precautions, and we don't cut corners. A private



"In this next scene, after you do your little dance I want you all to run back to your eggs and sit on them."

GALLERY
HUSTLE

"Nice genitalia."

• •

company can't do that." If the pricing and management problems can be resolved, "we will be happy to see the money go to the United States," al-Minayes went on. "Personally, I respect the American people for what they've done for my people in the war. I will be grateful to America." He added that the Enron consortium, backed by James Baker, will get the contract "only if it is to the benefit of both of us."

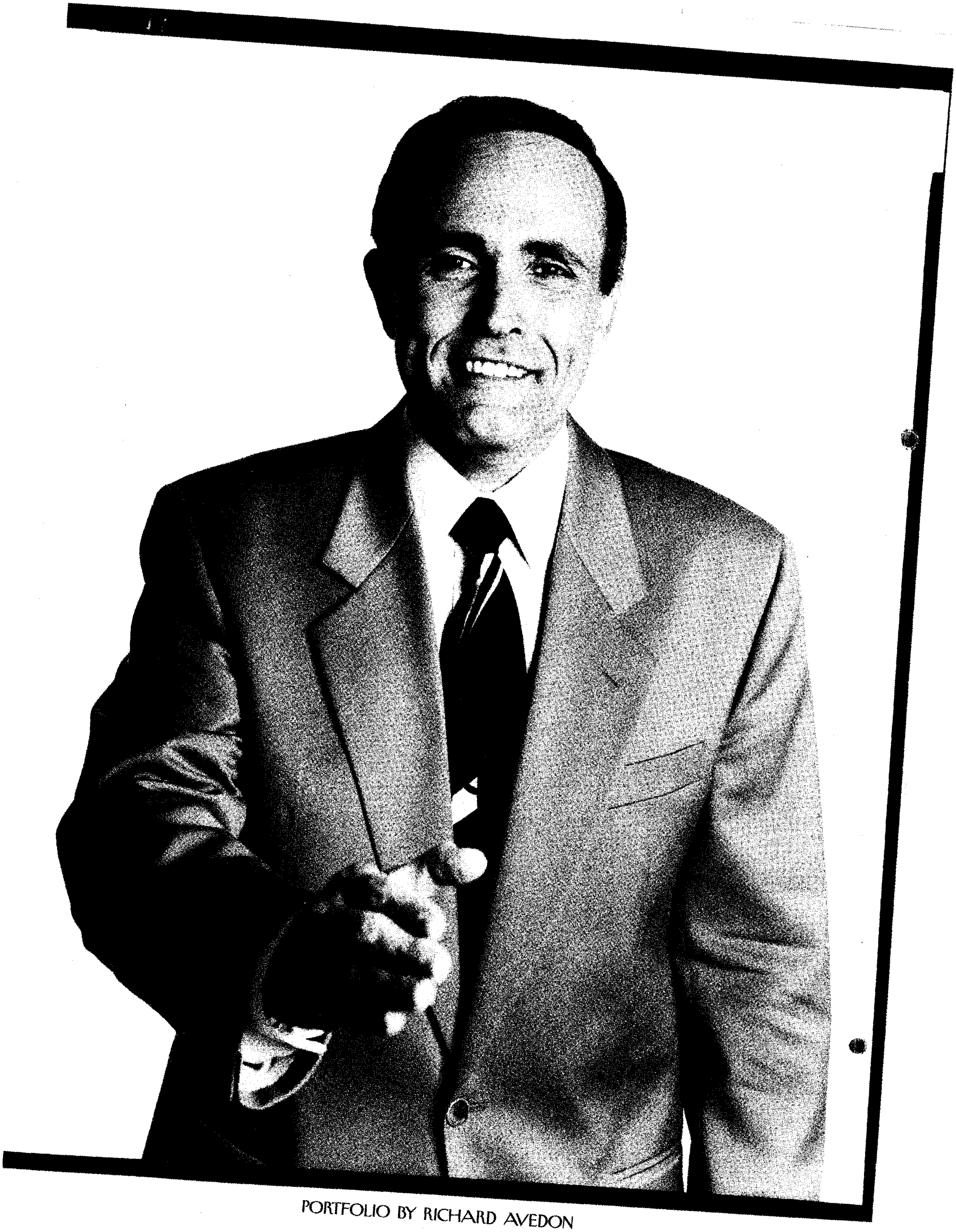
Some Kuwaiti businessmen and bankers disputed the official view. In interviews, they depicted Enron's proposal as fatally flawed, and declared that the mere fact of its continued consideration by MEW reflects political pressure from the al-Sabah family. Faisal Ali Mutawa, a prominent member of the finance committee of the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce, said that Enron's Kuwaiti partners in the consortium had obviously been handpicked by the Prime Minister. "Nobody can do such things without the Prime Minister," Faisal Mutawa said. "I don't think there's anything wrong with doing business, but not like this. It's too obvious, too clumsily managed. To take an American company, give them a Kuwaiti partner, and say, 'I will give them this deal for a power station'—irrespective of costs. You'd rather give somebody something—a gift—rather than make Kuwait suffer for generations. You don't build power stations irrespective of price and control."

Faisal Mutawa, who is a managing director of one of the largest privately owned business concerns in Kuwait City, was sharply critical of the pending Shuaiba deal. "I know it's not unusual for American politicians to go into business, but not like this. This is not a correctly managed business. It's like if I wanted to buy a complex mainframe computer for my business and I go to you and say, 'Bring it to me. I don't care if it works and what it costs.' James Baker knows what business is like. I admired him as Treasury Secretary, and I admired him much more as Secretary of State."

Dr. Ziad el-Taki, then chief economist for the National Bank of Kuwait, said, "We expect this from the Americans. They don't come here for sightseeing or for fun and games. They all think that people are naïve—that because they liberated Kuwait they can do business. If I were in Baker's shoes, and had any aspirations to run for President in 1996, I wouldn't want any deal like this to be on my record."

The National Bank of Kuwait, although it is not a participant in the Enron consortium, has been following the transaction closely, el-Taki said, largely because of fears that the privatization of Kuwait's power industry would do little to help the government meet its essential goal of shifting the economic burden from the public sector to the private sector. The cost of electrical power will inevitably go up under private management, and the increase will inevitably be shifted to the public sector. "I don't think it will go through—even though it's Baker," el-Taki said. "He might be a shining star now, but in a year's time they'll treat him like everyone else."

One highly placed member of the al-Sabah family, who agreed to be interviewed only after being promised anonymity, said that the government was planning to proceed very carefully with the Shuaiba project, and would not be influenced by James Baker's involvement. "What do you suggest we do? Blacklist Jim Baker? Keep him out of Kuwait? It's really up to the American firms. They already have a tremendous advantage in Kuwait. There is tremendous good will toward anything American. They don't really need high-profile people to help them open doors, because the doors are open." ♦



PORTFOLIO BY RICHARD AVEDON

HOW YA DOIN'?

They are of different parties, philosophies, races, and political generations (Rudolph Giuliani, the Republican, is forty-nine, and David Dinkins, the Democratic incumbent, is sixty-six) but of the same profession: lawyer-politician. On November 2nd, one of them will be chosen as New York's mayor, to be sworn in next January.

FICTION

THE BLACK ROOM

BY JOHN UPDIKE

“I DON’T *want* to go,” said Lee’s mother, though she had already agreed to go, in the too bright, teal-blue silk dress that had come out of the cedar closet where it had hung for all the years in which she had been too fat to wear it. Her weight loss was not a good sign, Lee felt, though as a boy and then as a man and then as a middle-aged man he had hoped for it. Less of a mother, he had thought, would be more—more chic, more manageable. But now that she was in her eighties and her clothes hung loose on her and her skin hung loose above her elbows, he was frightened. He wanted her bulk back.

He tried joking: “It’s the chance of a lifetime.” She didn’t smile, so he tried backing out: “You don’t have to go. I’m the one who cares, so I’ll go alone.”

Yet it had been her idea. She had heard that their old house in the city of Alton was being sold; the then-young couple who had bought it, Marine Lieutenant Jessup and his wife, had enlisted in a retirement community and placed the house on the market. Embarrassingly, Lee felt, his mother had phoned the Jessups and explained how much it would mean to her son if he, on one of his monthly visits from New York City, might come by. Neither she nor he had entered the house since that drizzly November day forty-seven years ago when the movers had cleared out their furniture, damaging the cane-backed sofa and breaking two plates of Philadelphia blueware in the process. The family, which had numbered five then, climbed into a newly bought secondhand Chevrolet and drove twenty miles in the rain to the unimproved farmhouse that Lee’s mother had settled on as the site of her long-deferred self-fulfillment.

She said now, “That Alton house nearly killed me and I swore I’d never set foot in it again.”

“You’ve made your point. Forty-seven years is as good as never. You’ve put the house in its place, Mother.”

“Your grandfather was always convinced that Jessup had slipped Jake Oberholz a fifty, to persuade us to accept the eight thousand.” Lee had heard it all before: Oberholz had been their real-estate agent, and Jessup had been fresh out of the Marines, a quiet war hero, slim and blond and tall in Lee’s memory of him, and in a white dress uniform. Lee had seen him once, in the front hall, from the height of a twelve-year-old, while the sale was still being negotiated. The whole thing had gone on over Lee’s head.

“Well, you didn’t want the place,” he pointed out. “Jessup did. Come on. We can’t not go now, after you’ve got us invited. You shouldn’t have set this up if you didn’t want to go.”

“I was trying,” she said primly, “to please my only child.”

They maneuvered themselves out of the back door of the sandstone farmhouse, and were halfway across the yard to Lee’s BMW, with its blue-and-white New York plates. His mother’s car, with its blue-and-orange Pennsylvania plates, was stored in the barn. Her cardiologist had forbidden her to drive, though she occasionally did, to the 7-Eleven at a crossroads two miles away, “to keep the engine from seizing up,” she said. They moved slowly, her hand heavy on his arm; even a little exertion left her short of breath, though she didn’t stop talking: “I don’t know why you always spite me by loving that house so.”

“I don’t say I love it. I was born there, is all.”

“It was too much house—my father’s vanity made itself a monument the day he bought it. He bought it when I was off at college, without even telling me. I never could feel at home there. Neither could Mother. We weren’t city people. It nearly killed her, trying to keep it clean, up to city standards. It had a peculiar dust in it, that clung everywhere.”

He had heard this before, too, but its implausibility still made him laugh. “Well, you showed it,” he told her. “You escaped its clutches.”

“I don’t know why you’ve always resented our moving. Honest to goodness, Lee, I added years to all of our lives by getting us out of Alton. The only city person among us was your father.”

Everyone had been sick that first winter in the little farmhouse, which had been heated by fireplaces, with an outhouse at the bottom of the yard. There was no heat at all upstairs. It had snowed from November to March. Their water came from a pump on the back porch, up from the icy earth. There had been no electricity. Lee and his father had gamely participated in the first wave of renovations but gradually spent more and more time in the family car together, prolonging errands, running back to Alton.

“I was just a child, Mother. I was in no position to resent anything. I’m still not.”

But was she right? Had he loved the house, all these years, just to spite her? It was a long, narrow-faced brick house on a wider lot than most along the street. In his childhood the bricks had been painted pale yellow and the trim dark green. There was a front porch, a side porch, and an upstairs porch, and the yard had held cherry trees, a walnut tree, a birdbath, a bed of lilies of the valley, and a vegetable garden that his grandfather turned with a shovel every spring.

“I can take it or leave it, seeing the house,” he said. “This trip wasn’t my idea, remember.” They were skimming along a highway lined with ranch houses, which had been a winding asphalt road the first time he had travelled it, with an occasional dirt lane leading off to a barn, a silo, a square stone farmhouse just like theirs.

“I had to, seeing as it was our last chance. They were always inviting [illegible], those first years. On every Christmas card. Then they stopped asking. I thought I’d get through life without ever having to see those rooms again. I like your idea, of you going in alone. You could drop me off at Weisbach’s Drug Store for half an hour.”

His mother’s fanciful distortions and quick little visions had always struck him as a higher form of truth. This trip *was* his idea; she had read his mind and arranged it to please him. He said, truthfully, "Without you, Mother, it'd be no fun."

"I could sit at the counter and have a sundae. You have to say this for Luther Weisbach—he didn't stint on the butterscotch."

"Mother, I don't think it's still called Weisbach's. And drugstores don't have counters any more."

The road surface wore a moist shine. It was a soft late-September day, the sunshine golden and the trees misty. A barn whose red side had said "Jesus Saves" in fading letters year after year was suddenly gone, replaced by a Japanese-style building with wide eaves and redwood shingles—a golf-course clubhouse.

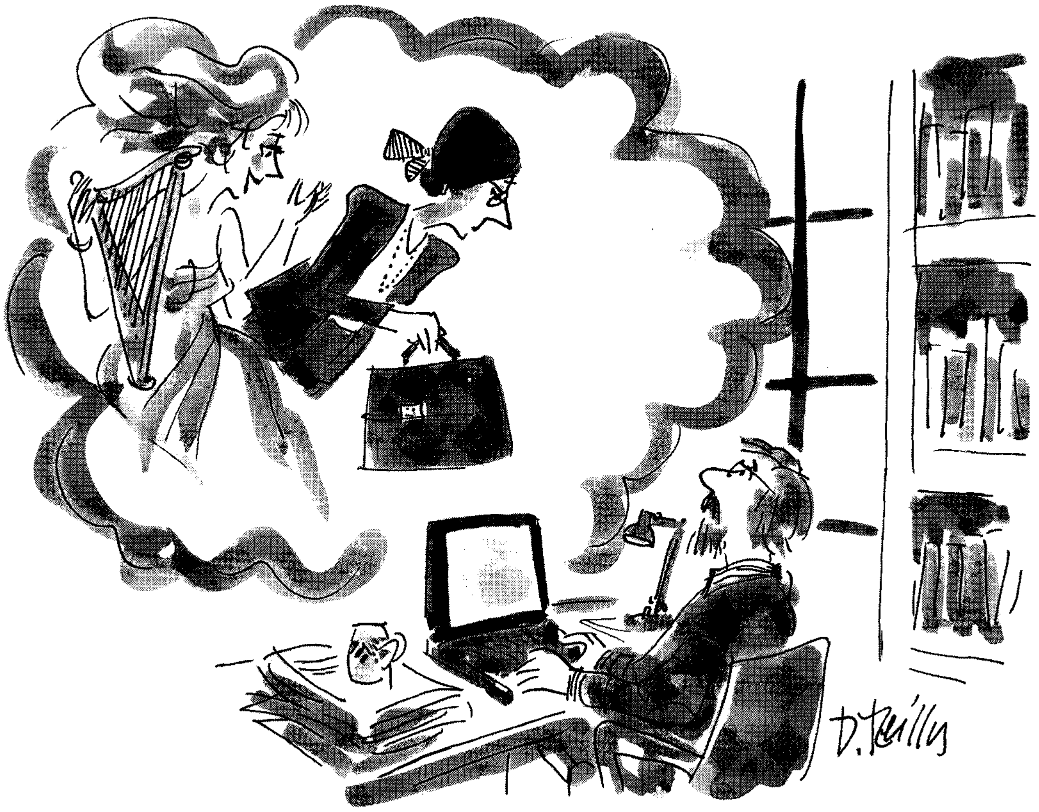
"You weren't such a child," his mother said, picking up another thread of her mental web. "You were thirteen. If we'd stayed there you'd still think of yourself as a child. That house made everybody in it childish. As long as I was in that house, I was just my parents' daughter."

The Depression had thrown them all together. The Crash took his grandfather's savings, and then his father had been laid off from his job in Pittsburgh. Lee had been born into this nest of disappointment, and had been a happy child. All four adults had conspired to make him happy, as if his happiness might yet reverse their fortunes. They had scraped by, with various jobs. The war had come along and helped. With their modest war profits, his mother had finagled the change of houses, moving them to what his father had called "the sticks." Now, with his grandparents and father long dead, the sticks—raspberry canes and sumac and wild grape and poison ivy—were moving ever closer to the little farmhouse, as his mother's strength waned. For decades she had wielded the clippers and scythe like a man, and had ridden the power mower hour after hour, bouncing in widening circles around the lawn. Now reluctant teen-agers did the mowing, when they could be recruited from the countryside. His mother's house smelled of dust balls and mouse droppings; the plumbing and heating, brand-new in 1946, had become antique. Yet she insisted, "That Alton house was never healthy. The coal furnace made a gas that sat on my chest whenever I'd lie down."

Lee laughed again, for they had reached the far end of his old street, and he was heading home.

THIS neck of Alton had a small-town quality, many of the houses freestanding on lots adorned by hydrangeas and rhododendron bushes, and even the semidetached houses solid and well kept up. The vacant lots of Lee's childhood had been filled in, and the street had been widened at the expense of a row of sycamores whose blotched bark and buttony seed pods had seemed oddly toylike to him, as if God were an invisible playmate. On the uphill side, a tall row of semidetacheds held fascinating little guttered spaces between them, passageways sexual in their intimacy, with a thin slice of sky at the top. Even widened, Franklin Street from its far end had a contained, narrowing look. In the side of Lee's vision his mother's hand fumbled in her black pocketbook and darted one of her nitroglycerin pills into her mouth. "Don't be nervous," he said.

Over her teal-blue dress she had donned, though the day was unseasonably warm, an old-fashioned wool overcoat in a broad plaid, with a fox-fur collar. Her thick head of chestnut hair had been one of her youthful glories; Lee remembered from childhood the witchy, dripping tent her hair made after she had washed it, a towel worn over her shoulders as it dried. Now this hair, gone in the last decade from iron-gray to a gauzy white, let pink scalp show through, and she wore indoors and out a round knit cap on her head, bigger than a beanie but not quite a beret. Her ankles and feet were so swollen she could no longer squeeze her feet into anything but running shoes; even for these, she had chosen a vivid, several-striped pattern. From the days when she had been a young beauty and her father had still had money, she retained a taste for attention-getting clothes. Lee tried to repress his embarrassment, as he had when he was an adolescent and she was a vivacious, overweight, countrified woman, her sun-reddened hands and forearms scored by the scratches of raspberry and greenbrier thorns. "Why



"My job is finished, so I'll turn you over to my colleague, who will vet the manuscript for any little problems."

would I be nervous?" she asked testily.

It was he who was nervous. Parking the car, he rubbed the tires against the curb, which the street improvement had left higher and whiter than it had been. Getting out of the car, Lee seemed eerily tall in this setting of his earliest days. The houses across the street, with their trees and telephone poles, presented the same silhouettes, though on this side the sunshine struck down strangely through the absence of sycamores, and the Jessups had taken away the waist-high box hedge that had shielded the front yard from sidewalk traffic. Sidewalk traffic, of course, was a thing of the past; it belonged to the Depression, and to door-to-door salesmen walking on foot, and people running to catch clanging trolley cars. The new concrete curb of the widened street was so high that his mother couldn't get the door of the BMW to swing open, and he had to repark it, his stomach nervously pinching. Entering this house again, this paradise at the far end of his life, seemed a trespass.

The brick front walk, with little ant cities of mounds like coffee grains between the bricks, had become glaring concrete. The distance across the porch to the front door, which he remembered as large and full of peril—for the porch had thick brick walls which might conceal a crouching beast—had dwindled to two strides. The door, with its letter-slot lid saying "MAIL" and its bevelled-glass window, had been replaced by an opaque panelled door, though the leaded sidelights and tinted fanlight holding the house number, 303, remained above. Jessup, who greeted them inside the door, had grown shorter than Lee, but his hair was still close-cropped and blond, and his figure had a military trimness. Mrs. Jessup, whom Lee had never met, was like a bride on a wedding cake, perfect of her kind, though grown plump and white-haired. She had dimples and bifocals, and cheeks as round and pink as if rouged. The Jessups greeted Lee cordially, but saved their real ardor of welcome for his mother, whose shrunken figure seemed, to him, engulfed by their courteous bodies. His eyes were darting about, desperate to light on something familiar and cherished.

"What a *nice* idea this is," said the former marine. "I must say, you folks have waited to the very last minute."

"Well, my father used to tell me, 'Don't be so impatient, Lucy. Good things keep.' "

Her charm—Lee tended to forget that about his mother. When pulled out of the sticks and put to the test of social encounter, she rose to the challenge. "I love your yellow wallpaper," she told the elderly couple. "This was always such a dark hall, with the two big gloomy radiators. I never knew why there had to be *two*; on winter days it was the warmest spot in the house. Lee used to lie on the floor, drawing, where we all had to step over him."

The flattened texture and faded brown of the carpet that had lain at the edge of his drawing pad returned to his mind's eye out of the past, along with the diagonal beams of dust-laden light that came in the sun-parlor windows and broke on the wide oak arms of his grandfather's favorite chair. The sun parlor was gone, swallowed up by an office; Jessup had used the G.I. Bill to become an attorney. Lee was tempted to open the office door on the chance that his grandfather was still sitting there, in the slant of sunlight, his head tilted back in that ostentatiously resigned way he had, and his hands, frail and brown as onionskin, folded across the buttons of his gray sweater as he waited for the mailman or the afternoon paper boy to bring him word of the world. His grandfather had exuded an air of quiet defeat that the boy found endearing.

"Everything is so *right*," his mother was saying. "When we were here, everything was slightly *wrong*."

Lee knew, as the Jessups did not, that his mother distrusted rightness, in this bourgeois sense—felt herself rather above it, in fact. As her breathy voice flirted behind him, in and out of the Jessups' catering voices, he felt freed to walk ahead, looking for traces of the house he remembered. There were almost none. Renovations had come in and washed everything away, even the old touches of elegance like the elaborate spindlework headers above the wide doorways into the living room, and the fluted wooden pillars beside these. The ceilings, plastered in tidily overlapping semicircles, seemed lower. Instead of their old Oriental rug with its mazy border and the cane-back settee and its companion chairs—their brown cushions holding that musty, oystery scent country parlors have—there was fat modern furniture in pastel shades surrounding a glass table supported on wrought-iron scrolls. A semi-tropical Floridian luxuriance had crept into Pennsylvania interiors since the forties. Where their Christmas tree had annually stood, between the two front windows from which Lee would watch, beyond the porch wall, the coal sliding thunderously down the chute that telescoped out from the truck, now stood a blond-stained wood cabinet holding souvenirs of the Jessups' foreign travels—beaten copper, carved ivory, Mexican pottery, New Mexican turquoise.

The "piano room" held not the old upright Chickering piano but a large-screen television set and a cabinet of hi-fi components. Down the dark hall that had once seemed perilously shadowy and long, beside the flight of stairs his grandfather had called "the wooden hill," the dining room quickly appeared, minus the Tiffany lampshade that had hung from the center of the ceiling, and the mahogany-veneered sideboard with the cloudy mirror, and the stained-pine corner cabinet that had held their good china, including the Philadelphia blueware whose broken plates had been one of the costs of the move from Alton. In this room, on a strip of wooden floor between the figured rug and the doors that led out to the side porch, Lee used to bowl, with rubber Disney dolls—Mickey Mouse and Pluto, Donald Duck and Ferdinand—for tenpins. Now wall-to-wall carpet covered the space. Staring down, trying to picture the concealed floorboards, he was overtaken for a moment by a sensation of being in a cave—a sheltered sense of great things going on above him, where the Second World War merged with Walt Disney's busy kingdom, while he set up his battered rubber creatures and bowled them down again with a lopsided softball.

SONNET

Now the god of rainy August hangs his mask
among the city's spires and balustrades
and stone clock towers half-effaced in clouds.
On Park the first reflecting pool dims
with a thousand smelted-silver circle rims,
while west on Fifth a modiste scatters leaves
in fall vitrines, and felt-browed mannequins
resign the world with gestures of disdain.

Now in the Cloisters' high parterres the rain
floods copper gutterings, boxwood, terraced urns,
and mottoes. "The weather turns." Clamped to their pier,
the smiling Gaul, the murderer Clotaire,
and Elijah, bearded, water-cowled, exchange
their fine-lit ironies for rotes of pain.

—Anne Winters

The house was quickly traversed; next came the kitchen, which he had not expected to find unchanged. Even the plumbing had been moved about, so that in place of the slate sink with its long-nosed copper faucets now bulked an electric stove with a black-faced microwave, and where the old gas stove had poured forth X-patterns of blue flame a modern stainless-steel sink had appeared, the dishwasher and trash compactor installed to one side. Rose-colored cabinets matched a giant double-doored refrigerator; the little walnut icebox, the blackened tin toaster that had sat on a gas burner like a tiny house full of chinks, the food-grinder that had clamped to the edge of the kitchen table were so thoroughly, irrevocably carted away by time that Lee could scarcely imagine the boy who used to reach up on tiptoe to the red-and-white recipe box on top of the icebox. The family kept its meagre cash in the tin recipe box, and he was entitled, at schoolday lunchtimes, to buy a Tastykake to eat on the walk back to elementary school.

"So Mr. Oberholz came to us," his mother was saying behind him, "and said, 'It was an eight-thousand-dollar house when you bought it in 1925, and it's still an eight-thousand-dollar house in 1945.' My dad, he was such a trusting man, he believed him, just like he believed all those shysters who unloaded their stock off on him before the Crash, but me, I had a bit of the devil in me I guess, I couldn't believe it hadn't gone up in value *at all* in twenty years. Now I read in the paper that you're asking over two hundred thousand. I still have friends in town who send me such clippings in the mail. If you can call them friends."

Lee tried to intervene. "Mother, it's only since the nineteen-fifties that people expect to make money off of real estate. And now they're losing it again."

But Mrs. Jessup could defend herself. She had already gained a first-name basis with the older woman. Her cheeks aglow with a pretty blush of indignation, she said, "Lucy, we really couldn't have paid a penny more. Even so, we went into debt, so Hank was working nights as a watchman as well as going to law school. Those were hard times."

"It's been a kind house to us," Jessup said, in a soothing lawyer's voice, putting the done deal behind them. "We raised three beautiful children in it."

Back in the dining room, Lee at last found a survival of the house of his own childhood: the windows. They were still tall, gaunt four-pane windows, and the panes were still the old glass whose waveriness and oval bubbles had fascinated him as a child. He would stand and move his head and watch the lines of their neighbors' house undulate, as in the underwater scenes in "Pinocchio." The oval bubbles, like immortal microbes, were still there, in the glass, though combination storm windows dulled the outlook, and the neighbors' house was a different, closer house, filling the vacant lot where Lee as a boy had played fungo and kick-the-can with Doug Rickenbach and Shorty Heister and the neighborhood girls, who lived in the sexy row houses across the street and whose parents would call them home from their rickety high porches in the summer twilights, as the fireflies came out.

The tour of the downstairs completed, Mrs. Jessup politely asked, in the narrow hallway, "Would you like to see the upstairs? We moved some walls about, to accommodate the children; I doubt you would recognize much."

"I'd love to see it," Lee said. Upstairs had been the enchanted realm of sleep, of days home sick in bed, of his parents in their underwear, of his grandparents muttering behind their closed door. Ultimate realities had resided upstairs.

"Lucy, there was something I've always wanted to ask you about," Mrs. Jessup said, drawing close enough to touch the older woman on the shoulder, next to the prickly fox fur. "When we moved in, there were two little rooms out back, above the kitchen, looking into the back yard."

"Yes. The one on the right was Lee's room, looking toward the vacant lot."

"And the other, the one with only the one window, was painted black."

"Oh, no! Was it really?"

"Yes, and we couldn't figure out what it had been used for. Had it been a darkroom, maybe, for your husband's photography?"

"Norman never took a picture in his life. I was the family photographer, with this old Kodak that had lost its viewfinder. You paced off the yards and hoped for the best."

Mrs. Jessup persisted. "It must have been for storage, then."

"Yes, we kept a few things in it. Mother's ironing board, her Singer sewing machine, an old sleigh-bed headboard and footboard that had been *her* mother's . . . but I don't remember that room as *black*."

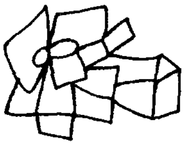
"Well, it was. We were quite struck and puzzled, I remember, at the time."

Sensing an impasse, Lee asked, "Mother, do you want to come upstairs?"

"No," she said. "No, I don't."

"Really? Why not?" He darted a look at her; her face, fallen into creases with her loss of weight, seemed pale, stricken by some internal development. He felt the effort with which she kept up the charm.

"You-all go," she said, "and I'll spare myself the stairs and just sit and admire how bright and cheerful the Jessups have made our dreary old living room."



"Then I'll stay right with you," Mrs. Jessup said. "We'll have a good chat. Shall I make us a cup of tea?"

For much of his life, Lee had seen other people his age, attracted by his mother's charm, draw close; but in the end, only he could follow her twists and turns. Sometimes he wondered if his personality hadn't been so exactly fitted to pleasing his mother that it was not much good for pleasing anyone else.

"Tea? To tell the truth, I never developed the taste for tea. I was a coffee drinker, up to a dozen cups a day, and now the doctors say I shouldn't drink even decaf. Coffee and ice cream and apple pie were my sins, and now I'm paying for them. Norman always used to say to me, 'You're the last person in the world, Lucy, who thinks there's such a thing as a free lunch.' "

While Mrs. Jessup coped with this pronouncement, her husband took Lee upstairs. In passing, Jessup touched the newel post, with its round knob. "Bet you recognize this."

"Yes." But in fact the knob, with its equator of beaded grooves, had seemed an unpleasant presence to Lee—an eyeless head, a possible Martian.

"I asked that it be left," Jessup said, with what seemed shy pride, "though Dorothy thought it didn't go with the new décor."

At the head of the stairs, one little flight of three steps had led to a hall that went past Grampy and Grammy's bedroom, on to the guest bedroom, which overlooked the street. Another short set of steps had led the other way, to his parents' bedroom and his own, and a third set had gone up to the communal bathroom. In this windowless landing they had gathered, sitting on the steps, during air-raid drills, while Lee's father strode around the darkened neighborhood in his air-raid warden's armband and helmet. Now this awkward architecture had been smoothed into a parade of bright bedrooms and adjacent baths to accommodate, in the Jessups' prime, the couple and three growing children. Lee's grandparents' room, which even through a closed door had smelled powerfully to his childish nostrils of countrified must, of old shoes and old bodies and mothballed blankets and bottles of pungent liniment, had become the Jessups' daughter's room; it was still decorated with her school pennants, a single, relatively demure, rock poster, her frilly bed coverlet, some stuffed animals, and framed photographs of herself as a child, as an adolescent with braces, as a graduating senior, as a bride, and as a mother posing with two small children in what Jessup told Lee was a back yard in Colorado, where she now lived with her husband, an Air Force pilot. "Born ten years later, she'd have been a pilot herself," her father boasted.

The guest bedroom, where his mother would go for her naps when she needed to get away from them all, and where Lee, when sick, would recline in a litter of picture books and cough-drop boxes, had been expanded outward, into a massive master bedroom, swallowing the hall window, whose sill had always held a potted geranium. At the back of the house, other walls had vanished as his little room with its stained and varnished wainscoting had been merged with the mysterious one next to it, and his parents' bedroom had been carved up to accommodate a spacious bathroom that the Jessup sons could share. The boys' bedrooms still held racing-car posters and traces of extensive electronic equipment. "Well," Lee said to his host, by way of termination, and in response to a certain unstated expectancy of congratulation, "I'd say you spent your years here very well."

"It was a happy house for us."

"Good. For me, too." No longer child and young veteran, they had become two aged men who had loved the same object. One had won and one had lost, but now the winner was surrendering the prize also. Lee looked around a last time and couldn't find himself, even in the shape of the windows. A hurricane of time had swept through this house, leaving nothing undamaged. His parents' bedroom had opened onto a side porch like the one below, with jigsawed balusters holding up the wooden, green-painted rail. The present railing was ornamental ironwork, as if they were in New Orleans.

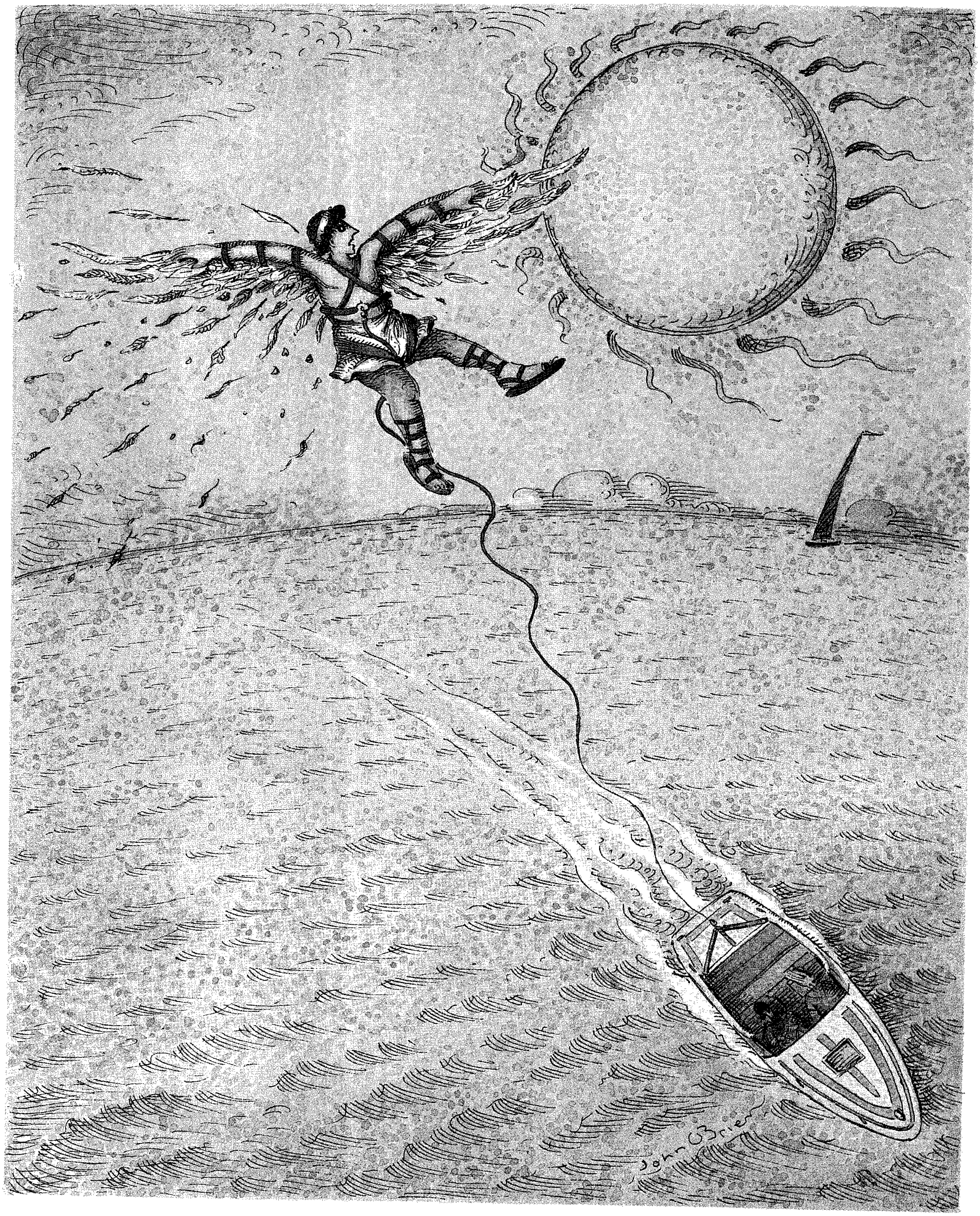
DOWNSTAIRS, a glance told him that his mother was in trouble. She had slumped to one side on the sofa, and was resting a bony hand upon her chest, as if to quiet something within it. Yet her face still bore a listening smile, as Mrs. Jessup finished saying, presumably of a son, "Now he's in corporate finance in Wilmington, with this wonderful Bank of Delaware."

"Mother," Lee announced, by way of rescue, "you missed a grand tour up there. They knocked out the wall between the guest bedroom and the hall and made a master suite! Grammy and Grampy's old room is full of pennants and teddy bears!"

"Dorothy was saying," she responded, "that she agreed with me—this house is hard on its women." She spoke in little hurried skips, struggling for breath. When she stood, she staggered one sideways step, and leaned heavily on Lee in head-

ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK BY JOHN O'BRIEN

THE SUMMER OF ICARUS


John O'Brien

ing to the front door. She had never taken off her plaid overcoat.

"Can't we get you anything?" Mrs. Jessup asked, her eyes and cheeks brighter with alarm. "Even a glass of water?"

"You've done . . . everything," was the answer. "I get . . . these spells, where my chest . . . doesn't seem to have any *depth*. It was lovely of you to let us . . . see what all you've done. You've done . . . wonders."

The porch, as Lee escorted his mother across it, seemed as wide as he remembered it from childhood. The concrete walk glared under their shoes as they shuffled to the curb. She allowed herself to be folded into the passenger's seat, and lifted a hand and waved it in response to the Jessups' cheery, worried farewells. As he drove down the street, in the direction in which he used to walk to elementary school eating his Tastykake, past Weisbach's Drug Store, she struggled to breathe, in intense, sharp sips; her body shook as if some invisible predator had it by the nape of the neck.

Lee asked, "Shall we go home or straight to the Alton Hospital?"

"Home." The syllable seemed all she could manage.

As he made the turn to circle the block, her hand in the side of his vision fed a pill into her mouth.

"That house," she explained. "I needed . . . to get out."

"Just like always." Her retreating into ill health irritated him. "Well," he announced, driving parallel to Franklin Street, "you won't have to see that house ever again."

"That room was never black."

"What?"

"That's what upset me. That room was never black. Why would anybody in their right mind . . . paint a room black?"

"That's what they said they were wondering."

"They imagined it. The walls had old cream-colored paper, with silver florets, and the wainscoting was pine, stained walnut. Mother used to do her sewing in that room, before her eyesight went."

"They couldn't have just imagined it, they must have had some basis, Mother. She was very definite."

"Yes, about everything. Maybe it was a joke. That's how those Alton people are. That's the way they were when I was a girl. Sly. Always poking fun. It made me feel bad. It made me feel crazy. That they would think we would have had a black room."

"How's your chest?"

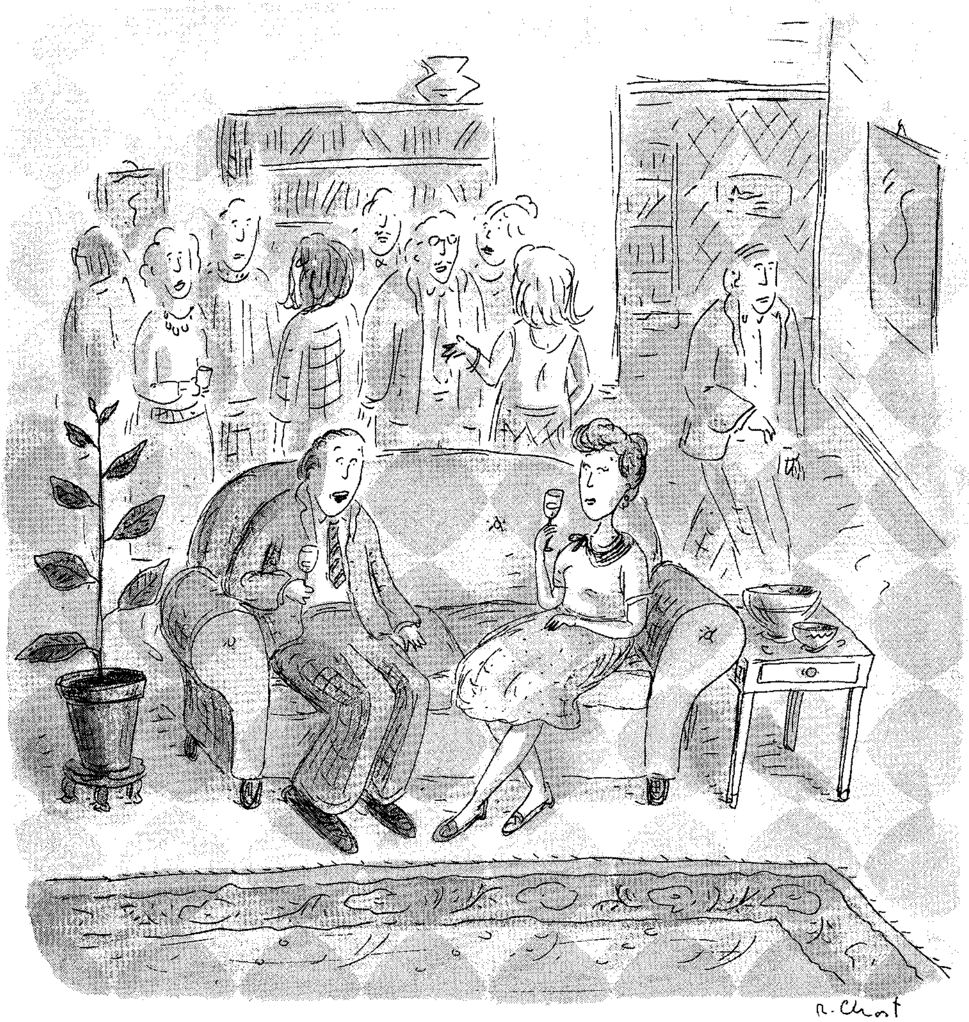
"A little better. Don't you remember how the room was?"

"I don't remember ever looking in, Mother. That room frightened me. When I would go to sleep in my bed, I remember, I would turn to face that wall so that if something came through the wall I could grab it before it grabbed me."

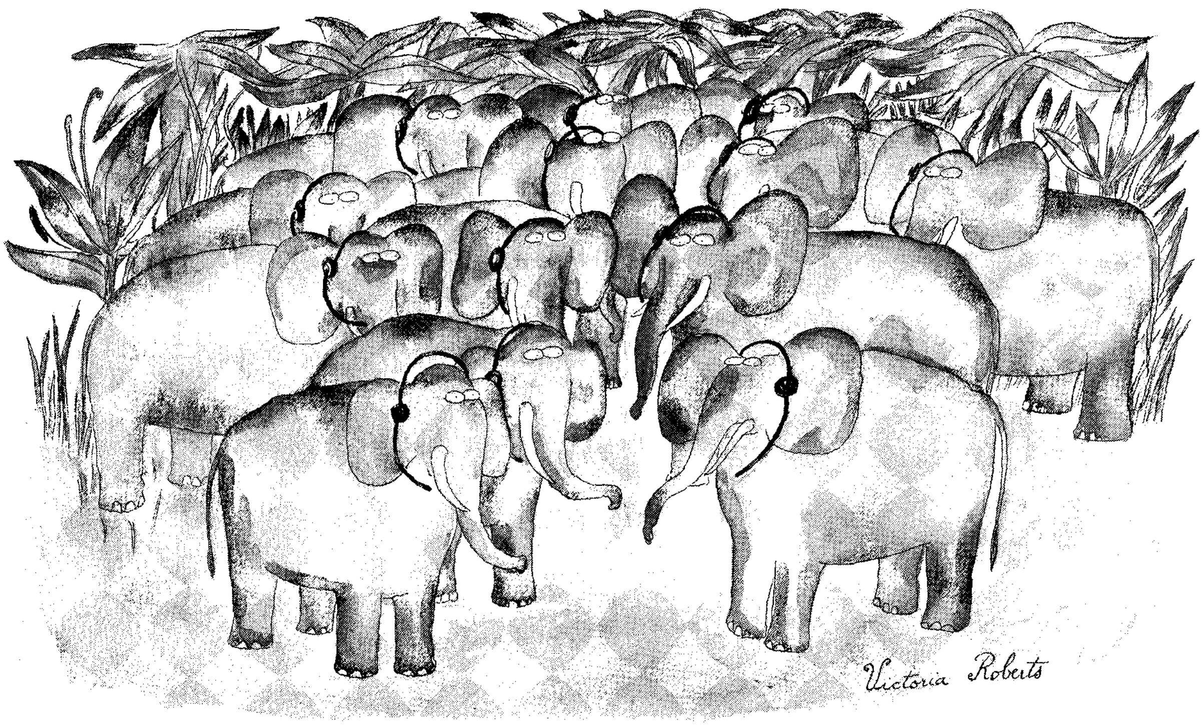
"Oh, my. And here we all thought you were such a happy child."

As Alton fell away behind them and the country roads sang beneath their tires, her spirits lifted. She helped him make their dinner, directing the cooking from her chair at the kitchen table, where she sat with all her pill bottles at her elbow. He fried a big slice of ham, boiled up some frozen succotash, and baked two potatoes in the crusty old oven: the kind of meal she used to devour, with a heaping of ice cream to top it off. She ate half, trying to please him, and he finished her plate, which made him feel unpleasantly full. During the night, he heard her moving about in her room, clearing her throat and gasping, on the other side of the wall. It was still dark, before dawn. He thought of going in to her, but fell asleep instead.

In the morning, the smell of coffee rose up the stairs—the smell of life. His mother was downstairs ahead of him, in her quilted purple bathrobe, with a tent of white



"According to my Zip Code, I prefer non-spicy foods, enjoy tennis more than golf, subscribe to at least one news-oriented periodical, own between thirty and thirty-five ties, never buy lemon-scented products, and have a power tool in my basement, but none of that is true."



“1-800 Herd of Elephants.”

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hair worn loose over her shoulders. “Isn’t coffee verboten?” he asked.

“Not to you, yet. I had a cup myself. I don’t know why that woman offering me tea made me so mad.”

“You were determined something would,” he told her. Lee had to leave right after breakfast, since it was a good three hours back to New York and he had promised to take his younger daughter to her riding lesson in Central Park while his wife went to a Sunday matinée of “Jelly’s Last Jam.” His mother came outside with him and shuffled along as far as the sandstone walk allowed. She was dressed in wool-lined suède slippers, and the uncut lawn was lank and drenched with dew. Beyond the house, the sumac was turning red here and there, and the poplars showed a yellow tinge. Fall was on the way, with winter behind. What would she do, alone? They should have discussed it last night, after dinner, instead of watching television: “Golden Girls” followed by “Empty Nest.” She had become an unreality addict.

“Wouldn’t you like it,” Lee asked, “if we could get somebody to stay in the house with you this winter?”

“The Jessups, maybe,” she said. “They could call this their retirement home. They could clean out all my cobwebs and put in wall-to-wall polyester.”

In the low morning sunshine, the eastward house wall was the warm brown of fresh toast. Lee was conscious of the wet lawn, the wild raspberry canes, the towering trees beyond as a tightening net of interwoven, ruthless nature. The house seemed as perilously small as his mother. From the pitying look on her face, he knew she was viewing him as a child, having one of his nervous stomach cramps. “It’s a real problem, Mother,” he weakly insisted. “It worries me. You shouldn’t be alone.”

She had taken to wearing her glasses less and less. The absence of frames gave her face a startled, naked look, even now, when she assumed her teasing expression. She asked, “Why would you want to kill me, making me live with somebody else? I just barely survived living with your father all those years.”

He was content to be dismissed, yet couldn’t make himself move off the sandstone walk, the ten yards or so to where the car was parked. This September day was beginning with high clouds, a few ribs of cirrus arched in the stratospheric cold. Some birds made a sudden flurry of noise in the old, half-dead pear tree. There was a buzzing in the air, a constant eating. The truck traffic on the Jersey Turnpike would be at its height. “Think about it. About, you know, more ideal arrangements.”

“Lee, this house *is* my ideal arrangement. Now don’t make Jenny late for her lesson. Girls love horses. That was why I resented my father’s moving us to town—it meant I couldn’t ride anymore. Here. Let’s see if I can make it to the road.” Holding on to his shoulder, she kicked off her slippers and stepped off the last stone barefoot. The chill of the wet grass sprang a delighted laugh; she hobbled with him to the side of his car. Her blue-veined feet were puffy on top, like a baby’s feet. “Now, I’ll be fine,” she recited, when they had stopped walking and she could get her breath. “I’ll take my pills and try to eat more and get some strength back. I’m sorry I let those city folk get the better of me yesterday. I had wanted so *not* to act up.”

She disentangled her weightless, onionskin hand from his arm and found a footing on the uneven lawn which held her upright while he got into his BMW and started the engine. Seen through the open car window, in the morning light, her face looked defenseless around the eyes, the delicate skin owlish. “I’m sorry,” she told him, “I let myself be so frightened.”

“You mean of the room that they—?”

She was startlingly quick to touch his arm again with her hand, to stop his mouth. “Don’t even *say* it!” ♦

CULTURAL PURSUITS

THE POET OF EMBARRASSMENT

In England, the playwright Alan Bennett is regarded as a national treasure and a bit of a mystery—an eccentric, famously private writer who wittily articulates the grace and grit of what it is to be English. That skill is on display in "The Madness of George III," which premièred in England in the midst of the royal scandals and opens here this month.

BY STEPHEN SCHIFF

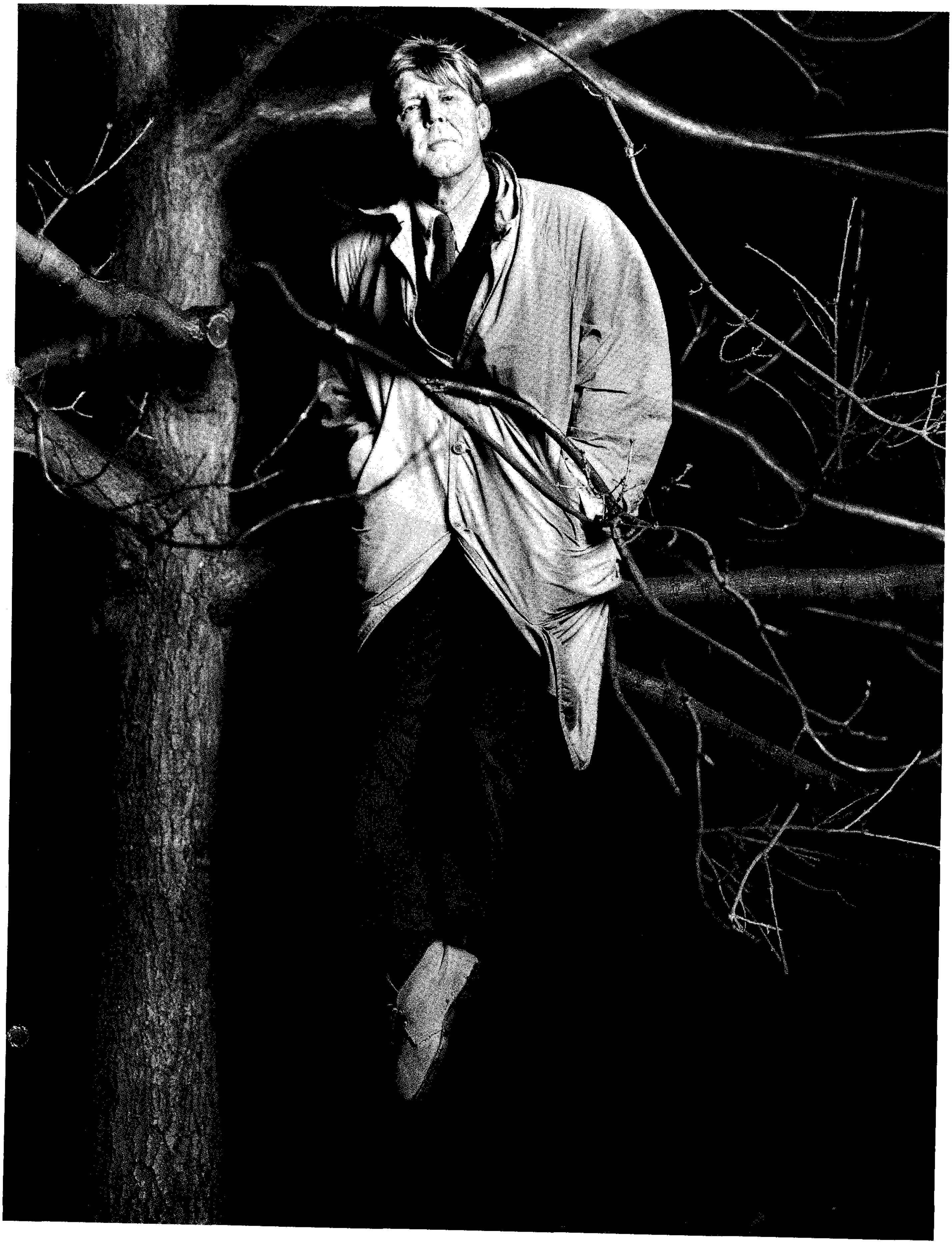
To a great many of his countrymen, Alan Bennett's face is the face of all England: bespectacled, kindly, and schoolmarmish, with plenty of sturdy chin for ballast. It's a face that evokes comparisons to Oxbridge dons and country vicars, a walrusy, sadder-but-wiser face; even the long upper lip looks appropriately stiff. Bennett is almost unknown in America, but in England he has been common currency since the early sixties, when he emerged as the most dour and reticent of the four comedians who made up the "Beyond the Fringe" troupe. (The others were Peter Cook, Jonathan Miller, and Dudley Moore.) Three bumpy decades later, he is one of England's best and most successful playwrights, and also, to his dismay, a kind of cuddlesome love object: the "National Teddy Bear," in the words of one journalist—a furry mascot to replace the departed poet John Betjeman (and the late, disgraced Philip Larkin). The English cherish Bennett's renowned aversion to parties and opening nights, his shrinking-violet manners, his circumspect suspicion of praise. He reads poetry to them on the telly, and their children doze off to the sound of his Yorkshire brogue purring "Winnie-the-Pooh" and "Alice in Wonderland" on the wireless; his voice is all gentleness, wisdom, good-natured reserve. If at thirty Bennett had the slumped and rueful mien of a fifty-nine-year-old man, now, at fifty-nine, he has grown young again: his features look timeless and inevitable, the skin golden, the apple-red hair as thick and glossy as a boy's, the wariness in the eyes softened to a pleasing rustic modesty. As much as he may wish to be taken as simply a writer plying his trade, to the British he represents something far-off and dear, a wee lost England of tea cozies and unspoiled country lanes and fair-haired schoolboys with skinned knees and heads full of Shakespeare—England before the Fall. As the exiled spy Guy Burgess puts it in Bennett's one-act masterpiece "An Englishman Abroad" (1984), "So little, England. Little music. Little art. Timid, tasteful, nice. But one loves it."

All of which makes him sound hopelessly precious. Yet this is also the man who wrote a play called "Kafka's Dick" (1986), in which Kafka's father blackmails his illustrious son by threatening to reveal the diminutive size of the lad's penis. This is the man who wrote "A Private Function" (1985), a movie dominated by an enormous and hideously dyspeptic pig, and "Prick Up Your Ears" (1987), the film about the British playwright Joe Orton—about his pursuit of gay lovers in dank lavatories, and his bloody death at the hands of his boyfriend. This is the man whose berserk farce "Habeas Corpus" (1973) features an ingénue wearing fake breasts, an amorous cleric named Canon Throbbing, a neurotic who attempts suicide by swallowing fifty sleeping pills that turn out to have been fifty laxatives, and a randy but distinguished doctor who explains his not so distinguished behavior by cooing, "King Sex is a wayward monarch." There's a duality that runs through Bennett and through his work: an awareness that whatever we pretend to be on the outside is a deception; that underneath we are all weak, noisome, and, if we could only see it, deeply embarrassing. For all his apparent snuggliness, he likes to make the bluenoses squirm.

His best plays (and even some of his worst) are also very, very funny, in a way that combines literary parody, toilet humor, raw smut, and some of the cleverest puns ever written. Bennett has lickety-split timing: he builds chains of gags, lets oncoming gags collide, sets off gags that keep exploding even after you'd thought the fuse had gone dead and dry. He is at once scholarly and boffo, flattering and coarse, and he can exhilarate audiences by stroking their intelligence and tickling them to distraction with the same feather. In "Forty Years On," his hit 1968 play about a daft historical pageant in an English public school, two of the students (one riding on top of the other) dress up as Lady Ottoline Morrell, while a housemaster impersonates Bertrand Russell. What follows is a kind of post-Wittgenstein vaudeville:

> OTTOLINE: Oh, Bertie.
> RUSSELL: Yes, Ottoline.
> OTTOLINE: I had an accident yesterday. One of my breasts popped out of my frock.
> RUSSELL: Oh? Which one? . . .
> OTTOLINE: It was while I was playing bridge with Queen Alexandra. Fortunately I was playing my cards very close to my chest so no one noticed.
> RUSSELL: I don't think you have ever appreciated, Ottoline, the saving qualities of elastic.
> OTTOLINE: Do you ever have the same problem?
> RUSSELL: Mutatis mutandis, no. But then I have led a very sheltered life. I had no contact with my own body until the spring of 1887, when I suddenly found my feet. I deduced the rest logically.

It may be hard to imagine sitting through two hours of such arch frivolity, but Bennett can also indulge his love of wordplay in quieter ways. He is the reigning master of a certain kind of circular epigram, and some of his best lines either have passed into the language or soon should. From "Forty Years On": "Standards always are out of date. Th[illegible] is what makes them standards." From "The Old Country" (1977): "I'm not happy. But I'm not unhappy about it." From "Kafka's Dick": "All modesty is false, otherwise it's not modesty." One of his best plays is another one-acter about spies, "A Question of Attribution" (1988); it follows the unmasking of Anthony Blunt, the "fourth man," who managed to conceal his past and build an enviable career as the keeper of



Alan Bennett, photographed by Richard Avedon in London, January 20, 1993.

the Queen's pictures. The play's centerpiece is an eighteen-minute conversation between Blunt and Queen Elizabeth herself (played onstage and in John Schlesinger's television version by the incomparable Prunella Scales). Never had a reigning British monarch been portrayed in the theatre before, and never, in any setting, had H.M.Q. seemed so subtle and discerning: in the midst of their diverting conversation about forgery in painting, we suddenly realize that she is spinning a dazzling trope—that the hypothetical fake she is discussing is not a canvas but Blunt himself. Elsewhere, Bennett gives her a wonderful joke in an exchange about royal portraits:

> BLUNT: It's true none of them quite capture you.
>
> H.M.Q.: I hope not. I don't think one wants to be captured, does one? Not entirely, anyway.
>
> BLUNT: You sound like one of those primitive tribes who believe an image confers some power on the possessor.
>
> H.M.Q.: If I believed that, Sir Anthony, I am in the pocket of anyone with a handful of change.

Lines like those have a palpable swagger; it's hard to believe that the cowering wallflower Bennett purports to be could have produced them. But then this is no ordinary mouse. Bennett is, among other things, an adept actor, who performs in his own plays and in other people's as well; he kibbitzes at rehearsals and hangs out on film sets; he can deliver a funeral oration eloquent enough to attract notice in the British newspapers; he even allows himself the occasional college lecture. I recently saw him give a spirited fifteen-minute speech at a New York luncheon held to announce his first transatlantic incursion in nearly two decades. His latest play, "The Madness of George III," a hit at London's Royal National Theatre, will soon tour America, beginning September 11th in Stamford, Connecticut, and moving to the Brooklyn Academy of Music on September 28th (Baltimore and Boston will follow). The play hit London at an auspicious moment: England's royals were in a state of almost unprecedented disarray, and the mortifying saga of Charles, Diana, and the ineffable Fergie seemed to reflect an even larger disgrace. The cynicism of the Thatcher years had given way to a kind of national self-loathing—a sense of lost empire, lost industry, lost civility and dignity and competence. Much as Bennett himself represented the snug little England whose passing contemporary Britons mourned, so his play, with its magnificent lead performance by Nigel Hawthorne (who will repeat it in America), presented a vision of glorious and honorable monarchy: the story of Farmer George, one of England's most conscientious kings, whose descent into madness in 1788 made even Queen Elizabeth's "annus horribilis" seem mild, and whose return to sanity proved so bracing to theatre audiences as to make them feel there might be a point to the monarchy—and a point to being English—after all.

At lunch, Bennett spoke ardently about the life of George III, about the king's mysterious malady, about what had attracted him to the project. (He had always liked the king's sense of humor.) Yet, only moments before, I had watched him squirm as he was introduced by Richard Eyre, the National Theatre's suave director, who couldn't resist describing Bennett the way so many do these days—as "a national treasure." As the encomiums rained down, Bennett seemed to shrink into himself, peering studiously at the table as though he were a sophomore afraid of being called on, fingering his lower lip and then twanging it like a Jew's-harp, his shoulders squeezed up toward his ears. He looked genuinely miserable.

"It *is* contradictory," he admitted when I asked him about it a couple of months later. "You show off and yet you say you're shy. I don't think it's hypocrisy. A lot of actors are personally quite shy—I mean, Paul Scofield and Alec Guinness. And that's because there's a mask when you're acting; you're actually not revealing yourself. It's a controlled situation. But when you're at dinner it's untidy, and I'm not articulate. And it's partly because my first emergence into this kind of society was during 'Beyond the Fringe,' when the four of us were together. Now, that involved being with Jonathan Miller a lot, who is supremely articulate and very funny, and Peter Cook's very funny. I think I did start off with 'Well, I haven't got anything to say anyway, and if I did I wouldn't be able to say it as well as they do.' So I think that to some extent that has stayed with me."

"It's quite hard to get Alan to come to supper here if there's anyone he thinks is grand or clever or articulate or talkative," says Jonathan Miller, who lives across the street from Bennett (and will often have supper with him four or five times in a week). "He really likes dining here only when it's us and the children and one or two close and intimate friends. He likes things cozy."

Not long ago, I caught a glimpse of Bennett at a very crowded, very high-powered cocktail party; he was trying to slalom through the yakking throng, and he looked approximately as composed as a child who has just heard a sinister thump under the bed. A moment later, he had vanished. "Yes, well, I just went away," he says. "I go to something like that, and I'm just terrified. And then, once you latch on to somebody, you're terrified to leave him, because you're frightened of crossing the room. Then you talk to someone nice, but you can't hear half of what he's saying, because there is so much noise. And then various other people are there, whom you get introduced to, and you can't tell who they are, because, again, you can't hear. I mean, I just get terrified."

But of what?

"I don't have any small talk, really. And I don't like standing. I actually don't like the physical business of standing up. That's why I'm glad I never acted in Shakespeare, because you never get to sit down. You can't sit down in the presence of all those kings."

Bennett knows when he's being droll, and he makes his funniest lines funnier by the typically Yorkshire way he ends them, letting the final syllable rise to a high whine and then descend halfway down the scale again. The effect is at once doleful and ironical: it says, "I'm pretending this is sad, but I know as well as you do how funny it is." Bennett has always known about being funny. "I know when I've made a good joke in a play," he says. "I instinctively just know. I can say it, and I can time it, and I can act it, and I do actually say it out loud when I'm writing it. I mean, if you saw me, you'd probably think I was mad. I tend to act things out and stride about the room, saying the dialogue out loud. I don't know how you write with somebody else in the house if you do things like that—that's why I've always lived alone."

On television, he appears solemn and quizzical and a bit depressive, but in per-

"I may have waffled, but I never lip-synched."

• •

son he's surprisingly jolly, given to fits of giggling and bouts of flawless mimicry. He is stretched before me now in an old desk chair in his living room, his hands entwined at the crown of his head, and his long legs thrust straight out, as if he were free-falling down a playground slide. The room we are in is at once homey and lugubrious, a civilized cocoon. The walls have been "distressed," meaning they look attractively bumpy and ruined and green, as though the paper had been stripped away and not replaced; Bennett discovered the technique way back in the sixties and watched it become popular two decades later. Everywhere you look, there are books and papers and pictures—very good English paintings, of what might be called the Reminiscent School. This one looks a bit Seurat and that a bit Cézanne; the one over the couch is a beach scene by Vanessa Bell, featuring Virginia Woolf stretched out in the sun. Over his desk, there is a hanging lamp, and attached to the metal shade there seems to be something very like a large sponge. When I point it out, he bursts into chagrined giggles.

"Oh, no," he cries. "Oh dear. It's actually for cleaning the bath, and I put it there. Because sometimes I forget the lamp is there and then I bump my head against it, and that's so I don't bump my head. I still do bump it, though."

How, then, does he explain the pencil hanging above the sponge, the one that the lamp cord is tied around?

More giggles. "I'm becoming so eccentric," he says. "No, the lamp was too high and I still bumped my head, so I tied the cord around that pencil, to shorten it. Oh dear. I know people do think I'm eccentric. And I think if you live alone you tend to get set in your ways, probably. Things that seem perfectly ordinary to you probably aren't; they're eccentric. But it helps you get away with things—that's what I think. I mean, I'm not very social, so if I go to dinners or parties and then leave right away, I think, Well, I'll get away with it because they'll think I'm odd anyway. I have this image, you see. And it's a shield; it's useful. When you get rung up by the papers saying 'Can I have your comments?' on the big round-robin kind of things, you don't have to do it, because you just say, 'Oh, I'm useless at that kind of thing,' and they take it. So it's all right."

Bennett doesn't mind being thought odd, but he doesn't like being pigeonholed, and, though his timorous image isn't erroneous, exactly, he loves nothing more than shattering it. He exults in surprising the neighbors by scooting around on the back of a motorbike driven by Jonathan Miller's son Thomas, and one of his fondest memories is of the time he spent cavorting with the youthful cast of "Forty Years On." "It's that people imagine you're a certain sort of character, and when we were in 'Beyond the Fringe' we each had our roles. Dudley was the clown and Peter was the sophisticated man of the world and Jonathan was the kind of mad-doctor-intellectual-genius and I was the kind of repressive clergyman figure. And if we're together now we fall back into those roles, you see, although Dudley has gone through this expensive psychoanalysis in order to prove that he isn't like this, that he's a much deeper personality—which Peter still refuses to accept. I remember when we were rehearsing 'Forty Years On' the boys didn't treat me like that. A big revelation in my life was when we were on tour in Brighton, and some of them were going out riding on the downs, and they said, would I like to come along, and I said, 'Oh, no, I can't ride; I've never ridden a horse in my life.' And they said, 'We haven't, either.' So I went. Well, that could never have happened in 'Beyond the Fringe.' That would not be my role—to ride a horse, as it were. And it turned out that they all *had* ridden horses, but I really enjoyed myself, and just somehow left this awful, priggish, repressive character behind. And I realized I had no need to be like that; I could be something else. You were finding that you were a different character from what you'd imagined yourself to be."

Among other things, he'd imagined himself to be gay. On being asked about his sexuality, though, he would generally turn cryptic. "There's been something of both in my life, but not enough of either" was one of his responses, and when the crusading actor Ian McKellen confronted him at an AIDS benefit and demanded to know whether he was homosexual, Bennett replied, "That's a bit like asking a man crawling across the Sahara whether he would prefer Perrier or Malvern water." Still, practically everyone he knew was astonished when, in the late seventies, he very quietly began a relationship with the darkly attractive woman who had been doing his housecleaning. Anne Davies was more than a decade his junior; she had been married and divorced, and had three kids, all of whom took to Alan with alacrity, as most of his friends' children do. "I'd always been in love with guys, you see, but always unhappily," he says. "They were always straight, and it was always totally unfulfilled. But I can't see that I'm a textbook case of anything, really. When Ian McKellen asked me that question, my answer was absolutely genuine. I was interested in sex, and whichever way any sex came along, you just had to take it—that's how it seemed to me. And it very, very seldom went with being in love, which I tend to regard as totally separate, separate from sex. But then with Anne—I mean, if anybody had said that would happen, I would have said, 'Well, that's ridiculous. It couldn't happen.' But just over ten years or so, you know, I just got to depend on her and just to like being with her more than with anybody else. And one enormous virtue was that she was not in the least interested in my work. She didn't want to be the artist's wife. And I like that, because I don't want to have to be explaining how far I've got with it every day." Bennett has a house in Yorkshire, and when the house next door to it became vacant Davies and her children moved in; there was a café attached, and she now operates it. "The café doesn't make any money, but she's very good at running it, and she makes people feel welcome and they come back. I suppose Anne is a reformed hippie, really, and she has friends in the village, and so, in a sense, when I come up I interrupt things. I can see that." He stops for a moment and pulls on his lip, staring through the brown venetian blinds into the street beyond.

ICE CREAM IN AMERICA

All of us getting our licks
and then some: the proud with the small,
those who fell off the canvas
and reappeared downstream.

. . . always forgets her pills, reverses herself, takes some.
The hen thinks chicks,
the man in the room, profile: a piece
of the undoctored action.

We wake up, admire the day,
let our shoes take us where they will.
The weather's glorious:
a real shine.

Fill your cap with nuts.

—JOHN ASHBERY

BENNETT'S London house sits on a fashionable crescent in Camden Town: down the road live his friend Mary-Kay Wilmers, the editor of the *London Review of Books;* the playwright and novelist Michael Frayn; the theatre director Max Stafford-Clark; and Anna Haycraft, who writes under the name Alice Thomas Ellis. Across the street, of course, is Jonathan Miller, now a theatre director and television presenter. "There's a woman who does tours of Camden Town," Bennett says, "and they come up this street, and they stop outside here, and they say I live here, and they point out everybody else, and how Angus Wilson used to live here, and A. J. Ayer not far away. And, once, they were on the other side by the postbox, and she was addressing them about these various literary so-called celebrities when V. S. Pritchett comes down to post a letter. He lives around the corner, and he's infinitely more distinguished than anybody else in the neighborhood. And he just threads his way through them. Nobody notices or recognizes him. It was very funny."

One imagines the crescent as a kind of glorious, street-long salon, but it is not. "Actually, there's a tremendous amount of ill will," Mary-Kay Wilmers says. "In a way, it's an unfortunate and ridiculous thing, so many people who know each other. Most of us come out of our house in the morning kind of hoping to make it to the tube without seeing a single person we know." Bennett, however, is the neighborhood "character," the one who talks to everybody, the one who can be seen each midday bicycling down to the Marks & Spencer department store to fetch some lunch, the one who spends his days alone in the big grayish house with the overgrown garden, peering out at the street life. Above all, it is Bennett who played host to the Lady in the Van—and Bennett who made her famous.

Her name was Miss Shepherd, and she was a grim apparition, a hulking, glowering, completely crazy derelict who lived in a decrepit van, which she insisted on parking near Jonathan Miller's house. Sometime during the late sixties, she cajoled Bennett into helping her give the van a push; by 1974, it had come to rest permanently in Bennett's garden, and she was living in it. Her residency there lasted for fifteen raucous (and foul-smelling) years—until her death—and became something of an urban legend. Bennett eventually turned it into a celebrated *London Review of Books* article, reprinted that article as a small book, and is now adapting it into a stage play; John Schlesinger hopes to film it.

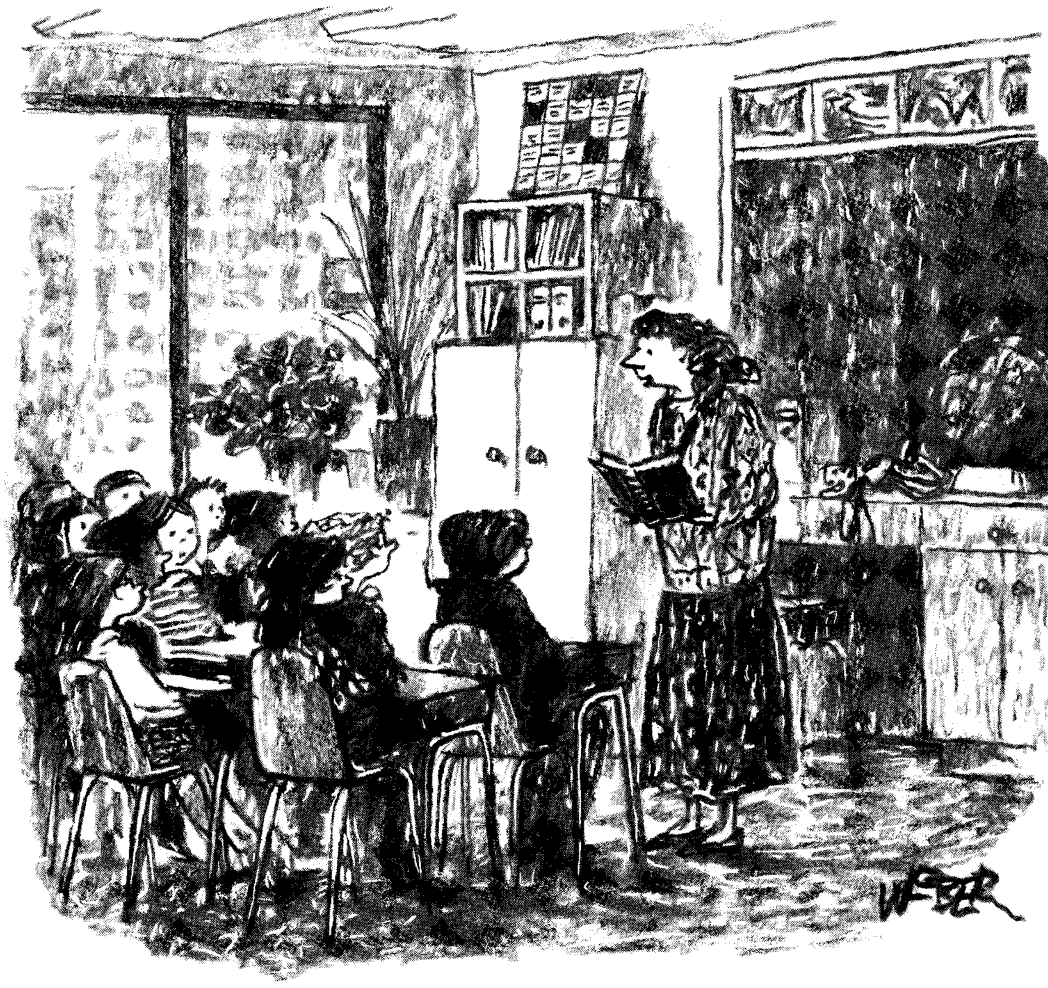
What makes "The Lady in the Van" such a deft literary performance is the same double edge that enlivens all of Bennett's work: though it may seem at first a particularly moist bowl of treacle, it is actually rather steely and tough-minded. Throughout the piece, Bennett's altruism is at war with other impulses—anger, derision, revulsion, snobbery, cruelty—and those darker impulses become the work's saving grace. Saints make for dull reading, but the Bennett who emerges from "The Lady in the Van" isn't a saint, or even a Teddy bear, but a human like us, entangled in [illegible] predicament that, far from revealing the depth of his compassion, forces him to confront its limitations every day. "People think of it as this sweet old lady being taken in by this nice man," Bennett says, "and it wasn't like that at all. It wasn't compassion. I was quite cruel to her, and she was quite cruel to me. If she had disrupted my life to a much greater degree, then I wouldn't have been able to put up with it. As it was, though, it was easier to live with her than to get rid of her, really."

Of course, the darker truth about Miss Shepherd is that in some ways she was a writer's dream. Annoying she may have been, but as a source of colorful behavior and uninventable dialogue she was beyond compare. "My mother had been deteriorating, and I'd been to see her in the hospital," Bennett recalls. "And Miss Shepherd asked me how she was. And I said, 'She didn't remember me.' And Miss Shepherd said, 'Well, I'm not surprised. You don't go down very often.' She was so nasty sometimes. The other perfect line was one day when she was poorly and I asked her, 'Do you want a cup of coffee?' And she said, 'No, I don't want you to go to all that trouble. I'll just have half a cup.' "

The Lady in the Van was the very apotheosis of a Bennett character—pitiable but too mean to pity, repulsive but too pathetic to despise, too comical to weep over, too sad to scorn. And in her awful funniness she resembled the characters in his greatest series of plays, the "Talking Heads," which appeared on British television during the eighties (and, in part, on American public television in the nineties) and won him the 1989 Hawthornden Prize. Their precursor is a television piece that has been a classic from the moment it was first broadcast in England, in 1982; no one had ever seen anything quite like it.

It is called "A Woman of No Importance," and when it begins we find ourselves watching the actress Patricia Routledge, who is fiftyish and plump, with skin that is a kind of institutional gray-white, like the wall behind her. She sits facing us on a stacking chair in her matronly black-and-gray suit, her huge handbag in her lap, and she tells us how she uses the toilet over in Costing instead of the broken one in Records, and at what hour you have to get to the canteen in order to "nip in before the avalanche," and who sits at her lunch table there, and what they talk about: Pauline's mother's nasty rash, "which affects her elbows"; whether Thames green makes a nice color for curtains; the virtues of runner beans in a "calorie-controlled diet." She tells us how polite a certain Mr. Skidmore always is to her, and she denounces Mr. Slattery for tricking her into Xeroxing something for him before lunch. It isn't long before we've identified her type—the petty bureaucrat, self-satisfied, tiny-minded, bigoted, and a grating bore. Moreover, there is no one else on the television screen, nor will there be. We are closeted with this creature, who gabs at us confidentially—and in detail—about the nothing she does all day and how much admired she is for it. Forty minutes later, she is in bed in a cancer ward, weak, alone, yet still astonishingly chipper, telling us now about the fly who has singled her out for admiration. By the time she disappears, we know everything there is to know about her—and we've come to agree with the fly.

"A Woman of No Importance" is a little miracle of dramatic writing, and so are the six "Talking Heads" that followed it, each with a single character speaking straight out at us, each with a sort of secret—a plot twist. Bennett has always had difficulties with plot. Sometimes he's been saved by the story's coming to him ready-made (as in "An Englishman Abroad," which is based on an actual meeting in Moscow between the actress Coral Browne and Guy Burgess), and sometimes by the sheer gorgeousness of his characters' speech; sometimes he hasn't been saved at all. Yet, in the "Talking Heads," plot, character, and dialogue work as a single organism, as though the dialogue were the skeleton, character the flesh, and plot the breath—a whisper of plot, just enough to animate the thing and keep it alive. The "Talking Heads" are the essence of Bennett: bleak, tiny lives writ large, so that the tragedy and the breadth of character come through without any pretense that these lives are other than bleak and tiny—in other words, without the



" 'Give me liberty or give me death.' Now, what kind of person would say something like that?"

Life After Gergen

sort of inflation that bedevils a play like "Death of a Salesman." In Bennett's world, no one thunders, "Attention must be paid!" Attention is paid because the richness of the voice compels it.

And there is something else here, too, that is pure Bennett: the sensation of doubleness, of a secret behind the façade. "In the 'Talking Heads,' there were two stories being told," Bennett says. "The story that the characters were telling themselves, and then the story that the audience was deducing from that. But I didn't know I was using unreliable narrators until I'd written the plays. And then, once I'd discovered that, I couldn't do any more. I've been trying for four years to do some more 'Talking Heads,' but I've not got anywhere. I wish I could forget that I'd done them. It's hard now; it's imitating oneself."

The "Talking Heads" are about deception and self-deception. That, in fact, is *what a lot of Bennett's work is about.* Of his three spy plays, for instance, two are about agents who have escaped to exile in Russia (Guy Burgess in "An Englishman Abroad" and a fictional spy named Hilary in "The Old Country"). They have deceived England and now spend most of their lives dreaming about it, concocting a kind of lost paradise in their minds. Bennett's world is the world of the Fallen: most of his characters have been kicked out of Eden, and the Eden is usually illusory—sometimes it's England, sometimes it's youth, and a lot of the time it has to do with power, which to Bennett is the biggest illusion of all. In his television plays about offices—"Green Forms" (1978), "A Visit from Miss Prothero" (1978), "A Woman of No Importance"—he invents a corporate world as horrifically bureaucratic as anything in Kafka or Václav Havel, only Bennett's version has more verisimilitude. He pricks the vanity of bureaucratic power by painting its emblems in minute detail: we don't have to know the significance of his green forms and PS104's and Direct Departmental Debiting to know that they represent a pomp and circumstance built on quicksand.

In "The Madness of George III" Bennett goes even further: the illusion here is the power of a king. "I knew I liked George III, because of this joke he made," Bennett says. "He had an equerry named Manners, and one day the king was ill and was hiding under a sofa when Manners brought him his dinner. So Manners laid a place on the carpet and he set the plate down there. And then he was backing away and he heard the king say, 'That was very good . . . Manners.' And I thought, Oh, well, that's good. And then when Gibbon gave George a presentation copy of 'Decline and Fall' he said, 'Oh, another damn thick book. Scribble, scribble, scribble, Mr. Gibbon.' But these stories slightly falsify his true character, because he was very cultivated, really. He was a scholar-king." Bennett's interest was spurred by medical histories published in England during the eighties, many of which argued that the king had not been simply insane but had suffered from a physical ailment; namely, porphyria. Friends (including Jonathan Miller) suggested that the "madness" might make a play, and for Bennett the idea came with a boon attached: he wouldn't have to think up a plot. By April, 1991, he had cobbled together a script that he thought of as "a load of slurry," but the rising young theatre director Nicholas Hytner (who had directed "Miss Saigon" as well as Bennett's enormously successful adaptation of "The Wind in the Willows" at the National) loved it, and together he and Bennett shaped it into a workable production.

The drama has a simple arc. The year is 1788; George III has already lost the American colonies, but in most other ways he is flourishing, a vigorous monarch governing sagely through his prime minister, William Pitt the Younger. And then madness: his urine turns purple, his skin screams, he can't stop babbling or befouling his clothes. All power gradually shifts to the doctors. And by the end of the first act one of them has had the shrieking king strapped into a restraining chair, which turns into a symbol of his Fall: if the throne represented absolute power, this mock throne represents absolute powerlessness. In Bennett's eyes, power is an unsustainable deception, and, when George III's reason crumbles, the deception is shattered: he becomes man at his most elemental, powerless to control even body and mind. It all makes for mesmerizing drama, and Nigel Hawthorne's performance as George will probably come as a revelation, even to American audiences who saw his touching, Tony-winning performance as C. S. Lewis in "Shadowlands." His

George III has higher highs and lower lows, and Hawthorne's ebullience and majesty are so infectious that his debasement may strike some viewers as almost unwatchably sad. But then his recovery comes as a balm. There's a lovely passage in which the king stages a reading of "King Lear," with the role of Cordelia undertaken first by the sinister doctor Willis and then by the chancellor, Thurlow, who is increasingly moved by the spectacle:

> THURLOW: (*Blowing his nose*) Very affecting.
> KING: It's the way I play it. Willis murders it.
> THURLOW: Your Majesty seems more yourself.
> KING: Do I? Yes, I do. I have always been myself even when I was ill. Only now I seem myself. That's the important thing. I have remembered how to seem.

A few moments later, two pages, Braun and Papandiek, enter, each with a glass chamber pot, and their arrival gives Bennett an irresistible opportunity to fire off the play's triumphal pun:

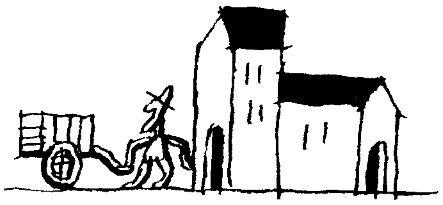
> BRAUN: Look at his piss. We're back to lemonade.
> PAPANDIEK: Mine isn't. It's still a bit inky.
> BRAUN: But that's yesterday's. This is today's. Piss the Elder! Piss the Younger!

In the end, the play will leave some spectators dissatisfied, and that may be because it collapses under the weight of its internal contradictions. The audience, after all, hates seeing this noble mind overthrown, and it rejoices when George regains his sanity and resumes the perquisites of power. Yet those perquisites represent everything that was wrong in the first place; to Bennett, power is a fabrication, a fraud that separates men from their humanity. "The Madness of George III" winds up celebrating what it has already demonstrated is a lie.

"GEORGE III" gave some English reviewers the willies for another reason: at times, its most moving component seemed to be the king's bowels. Scatology, private parts, the whole panoply of stuff that makes sixth graders giggle—this has always been a kind of obsession in Bennett's work. For good reason: it is the embarrassing secret we all have in common, the gooey, gross, essential stuff that exposes as a sham our attempts to distinguish ourselves from one another—whether by power or class or pretension. If you spend enough time with Bennett, you discover that a lot of what he thinks interesting or funny has to do with that sort of exposure. He is, in short, the poet of embarrassment. In "George III" and the "Talking Heads," in the spy plays and "Kafka's Dick," and even in the painfully self-conscious way he conducts his own life, he makes embarrassment seem suddenly profound.

He grew up with it. Bennett was reared working-class in Leeds, in the heart of Yorkshire; his father was a butcher, and his mother hoped that Alan and his brother, Gordon, who was three years older, would grow up to be "gentlemen farmers." Bennett is convinced that she got the notion from the romantic books she read, and perhaps it was his own entry into the world of books that planted the seeds of embarrassment in him, because the lives he read about were nothing like his own. "My parents were both very shy and unassuming," he says. "They weren't ones for going out. My mother had these dreams of living her life like in ladies' magazines and having people in. Neither of them drank, but they got a bottle of sherry—they knew that was what you did, you gave people sherry. But they had no idea what time of day you had it. And so people would be offered sherry at ten o'clock in the morning. But then they gave that up; they just went back into their shells. There was a sense in my family that we had a secret. And the secret was that we weren't like other families."

His parents always felt that education would have transformed their lives, so Alan procured a great one; he even managed to fulfill most of his National Service requirements (he was drafted in 1952) by learning Russian at Cambridge, while the rest of his platoon wound up in Korea. One of his fellow-conscriptees at Cambridge was Michael Frayn, with whom Bennett collaborated on a cabaret act. "But I was just fooling around then," Bennett says. "Michael knew that that was what he wanted to do, but I never had any such thoughts. Growing up, I had thought I would be a clergyman. I was quite religious." By the time he had completed National Service and taken a degree in history at Oxford, his faith had fled. "It would be easy to say I no longer believed, but I don't think I ever believed in the first place. And then, when I took my degree, I thought, Well, I'll be a don, I'll teach at university—although I would have been awful. I did do some teaching, and I was a hopeless teacher. I can't remember things, you see. I mean, I'd have notebooks, and I knew I'd got the notes, but I didn't remember what they were or where. You need to be able to have a memory that's at your fingertips, not in notebooks."



More important, perhaps, was his discovery that he had a "silly streak." While he was at Oxford, he wrote notably funny letters in the Exeter College suggestion book, and he began performing a little act he had developed, a parody of an Anglican sermon. In 1959, he presented it at the fringe of the Edinburgh Festival, and it was seen by the festival's assistant director, John Bassett. Bassett was putting together a comedy troupe that would go beyond the festival's fringe, as it were; he cast Bennett alongside Cook, Miller, and Moore, none of whom had worked together before, and by 1961 "Beyond the Fringe" was a West End hit. In 1962, the troupe kicked off a two-year run on Broadway.

Bennett performed several bits in "Beyond the Fringe," participating energetically in what Kenneth Tynan called "the only successful parody of Shakespeare that I have ever heard," and in a lampoon of war memoirs which anticipates some of the funniest passages in "Forty Years On." But his triumph was still the Anglican preacher, who launches the day's text in his fastidious upper-class whine—"But my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a smooth man"—and then clambers steadily toward a delirious apex:

> Life, you know, is rather like opening a tin of sardines. We're all of us looking for the key. . . . Others think they've found the key, don't they? They roll back the lid of the sardine tin of life. They reveal the sardines, the riches of life therein, and they get them out; they enjoy them. But, you know, there's always a little bit in the corner you can't get out. I wonder, is there a little bit in the corner of your life? I know there is in mine.

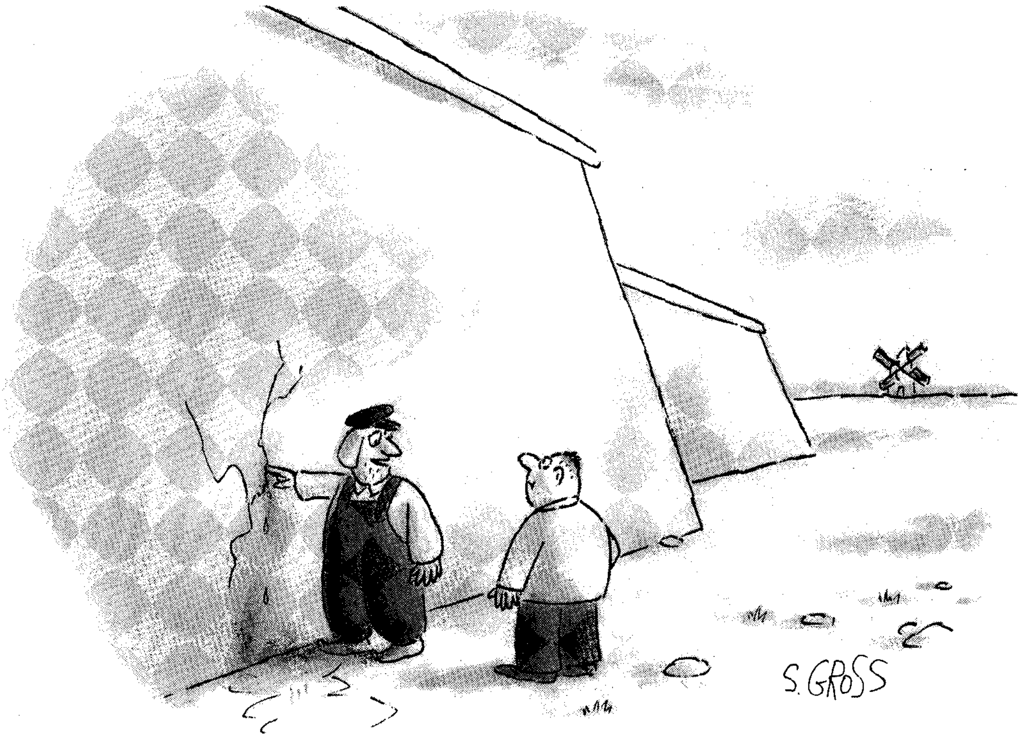
For the other members of the troupe, the success of "Beyond the Fringe" meant that doors opened everywhere, especially in America. Cook and Miller became fixtures on a very grand party circuit, and Bennett might have, too—if he hadn't been Bennett. "My stomach's always been my weak spot, just a totally nervous thing," he says. "I felt I was about to be sick always. So that any formal meal just filled me with terror. At that particular time, Jackie Kennedy asked us to have supper with Adlai Stevenson, and I was just too petrified to go. And the invitation came twice, and both times I said no, I was ill. I just actually thought I'd throw up over Adlai Stevenson. I've always regretted it, because it seemed rude, but it was just nerves, really. Shyness, which when I was younger I thought of as some sort of virtue, I now think of as both an affliction and a form of self-centeredness: you think everybody's looking at you, when in fact they're really busy thinking about themselves."

Then, too, Bennett was a bit of a puritan. "He had this tremendous moralizing attitude," Jonathan Miller recalls. "And during 'Beyond the Fringe' we got on very badly indeed. I felt that I was regarded by him as a sort of frivolous, noncontributing dilettante, whose capering around onstage got more attention than he, the diligent writer, got. I think he always felt during the 'Fringe' that he was the reticent one, the neglected one, the one whose name everyone always forgot. He was fantastically disturbed and upset by the success of Peter and Dudley later on. I think that he was more competitive than he cared to admit. But he admits it now."

Bennett had better relations with Dudley Moore, whom he would dine with regularly before the show. But that ended rather abruptly. "There was one sketch where an interviewer was supposed to be asking Alan something," Moore recalls. "Jonathan had tried, Peter had tried, and then, last but least, I tried it. And it never used to go down well until I started doing my usual performing bit, which was trying to get in with the audience, and twinkling at them, and stuff—which was something Alan did not approve of. And I remember coming offstage having done that, and I said, 'I thought that was the most wonderful performance of that particular sketch—terrific, wasn't it?' And he said, 'No, I thought it was the worst performance ever.' And from then on he never spoke to me. It was as though he'd never met me. We never went out for a meal again—nothing. But it's past, it's certainly past. Whenever I mention it now, he brushes it off with 'Oh, that was when I was young.' I think he's sorry about that."

There have been other fallings-out over the years. Mary-Kay Wilmers, who has known Bennett since the Oxford days, says, "I wasn't spoken to once, because I opened a sandwich that was wrapped in cellophane, and I put the cellophane in the gutter. I littered. I hasten to say that this was in the late sixties, before the days when littering was absolutely disgraceful. But he was deeply offended. He got out of the car and said he didn't want to go on to wherever it was—he would find his own way. And that was it. He didn't speak to me for months. But that sort of thing doesn't happen anymore."

Bennett readily acknowledges his past rigidity; in fact, he feels terrible about it. "I had been an awful Tory when I was a boy," he says. "Oh, awful. It was dreadful, the list of right-wing convictions I had. Oh, and I've often thought that if there were a series of unexplained murders in the North of England it would be discovered that they were actually people who knew me as a youth, and that I had slowly whacked them out, because they were witnesses to what I was like. But during 'Beyond the Fringe' I was still an appalling person, very priggish. And I was very competitive. I think deep down I felt, This is all I can do and I can't do any more than this—whereas you could see that Peter could really more or less write material at will. He could just go onstage and improvise fresh material, you know, with the audience in hysterics. So I think I felt very envious. And certainly when it was over I felt, Well, that's it. I couldn't see myself doing anything similar again, and I started to try and write odd sketches, and they really didn't seem to come to anything. And meanwhile Peter and Dudley were having a great success doing a television series called 'Not Only . . . But Also,' and Jonathan was editing 'Monitor,' which was the big BBC arts program. And I went back to Leeds and thought, Well, that was it."



"Instead of doing jail time, I'm performing eighteen hundred hours of community service."

The climb back has been difficult; successes like "Forty Years On" and "Habeas Corpus" have been followed by routs like "Enjoy," which was scathingly reviewed when it opened in 1980, and closed in less than two months. It wasn't until the late eighties that Bennett's stature became secure, thanks to a string of hits that started with the "Talking Heads" and culminated in three National Theatre plays: "Single Spies" (which combined "An Englishman Abroad" and "A Question of Attribution"), "The Wind in the Willows," and "The Madness of George III."

"People still think I'm sad," he says. "I think it's because I've got an unfortunate face. But I always feel much more cheerful than they imagine that I am. At one time, I was quite frustrated. And around that time I used to be a big leaver of things. If somebody said something I disagreed with, I used to take offense. I used to just go, and, of course, since I was not particularly social, it was an easy gesture to make. It was self-serving in that way. Oh, it's a terrible thing, but it was all thirty years ago."

Well, almost all. Jonathan Miller and his wife, Rachel, are still mystified by what Bennett calls "a *froideur*" that arose between them for several years during the early eighties. "We have no idea why," Miller says. "We've never broached it or talked about it. But he simply disappeared. Rachel sometimes wonders whether we offended him, said something wrong. I mean, we've racked our brains to think of what we did, whether it was something outrageous, or whether some exorbitant vulgarity or tastelessness or selfishness of mine had done it, and no one's ever been able to understand it. Then he just began coming around again, without a word spoken about it. He is in some respects our closest friend, but with this strange, unacknowledged gap in the middle of it."

The way Bennett describes it, the *froideur* was an act of self-preservation. "I think there came a point when I actually felt I was being swamped," he says. "And I sometimes still do feel that. Jonathan has two dozen ideas to my one, so that somehow one had to make a space for oneself. 'Enjoy' failed at about that time, and so I was quite low. It wasn't anything specific, but I just felt, Well, I've got to somehow withdraw a bit, because otherwise I will never be able to keep my head above water. That's still the case now. If I'm writing a play, I'll keep quiet about it till I've done it, very often, because if you do talk to Jonathan about it you'll find that his general knowledge of the subject will exceed your own. And so you then think, Well, what point is there in me doing it? You don't want to be pushed off balance, really, and he can do that."

"Can I have that with a twist?"

THE Alan Bennett I've encountered appears anything but off balance; he appears, in fact, almost robustly confident. And as we talk I find it difficult to credit his reputation for self-protection and privacy. In our conversations, he refuses to hedge or euphemize; his frankness seems almost too scrupulous. Gradually, it dawns on me that this is not so much the frankness of a man who is heroic in his honesty as the frankness of a man who is expert in the anatomy of embarrassment, who recognizes that embarrassment and its close cousin, humiliation, come from having something to hide—the way the characters in his plays do—and then watching in horror as that something is revealed. Better not to hide anything at all.

Certainly when you've been in Bennett's vicinity you find yourself viewing embarrassment in a different way: it comes to seem the secret topic of every conversation, of most gossip, of practically any joke. Especially in England. For what is the fabled British reserve but an attempt to avoid revealing hidden inadequacies, hidden desires, hidden angers and hatreds? And what is the equally fabled British irony but the winking acknowledgment that all those things are still there, underneath? And, finally, isn't it Bennett's perpetual embarrassment and perpetual irony that make him so plausible a British mascot? Success has given him the pluck and daring to harness his embarrassment, to plunder it for material, to brandish it on TV, to make it so much a part of his image that he has become nearly immune to its sting. He can still squirm when someone calls him "a national treasure," but by now he's waving, not drowning.

"He has come into his own," Mary-Kay Wilmers says. "It is a little like the last act of 'Fidelio'—someone who's gone through darkness into a great deal of sunlight. A lot of these things have come to him through difficulty, and now, in every way, he has what he wants. While pretending that he doesn't, of course." ◆

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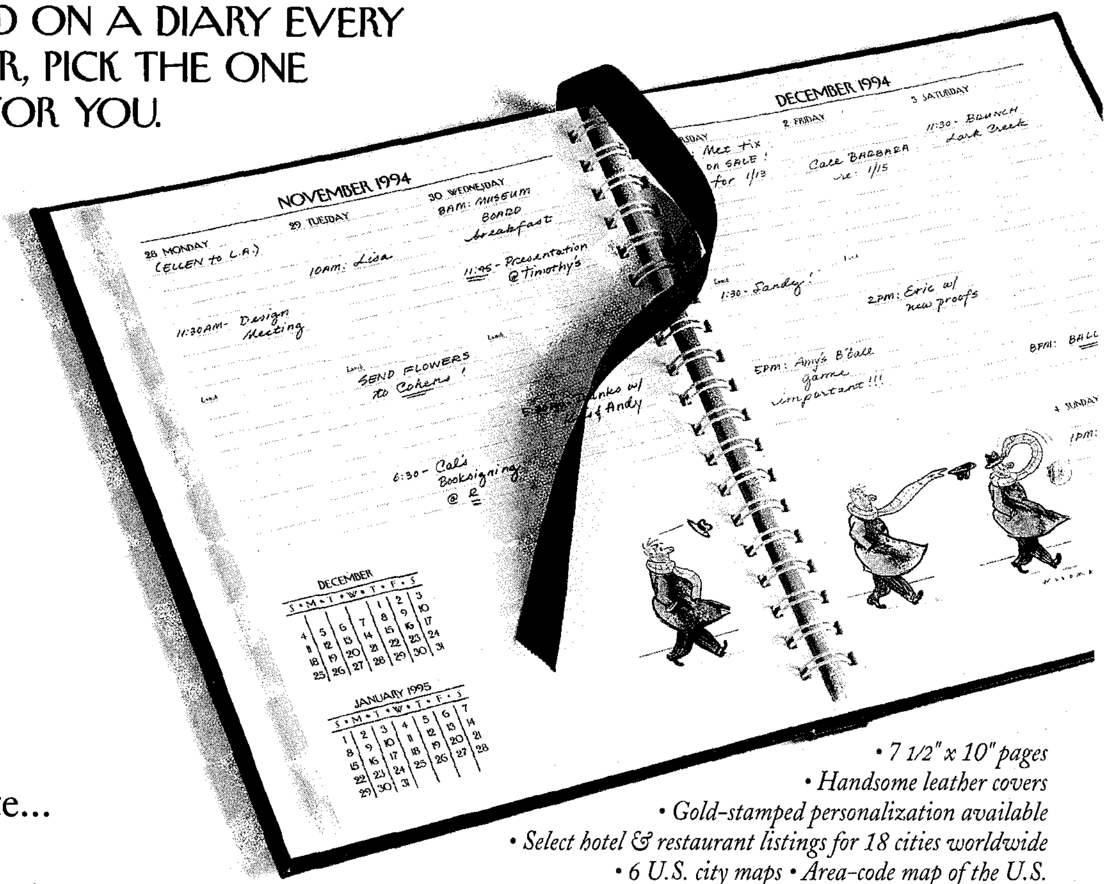
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30 WEDNESDAY
8AM: MUSEUM BOARD breakfast
11:45 - Presentation @ Timothy's
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6:30 - Cal's Booksigning @ R
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DECEMBER 1994
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3 SATURDAY
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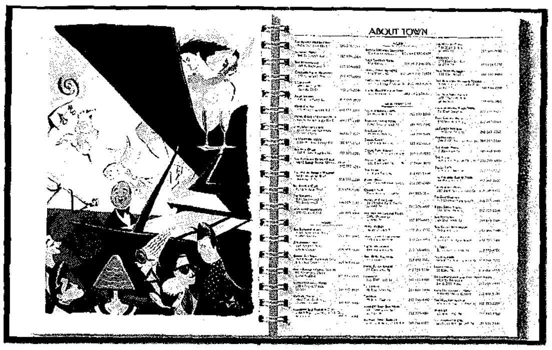

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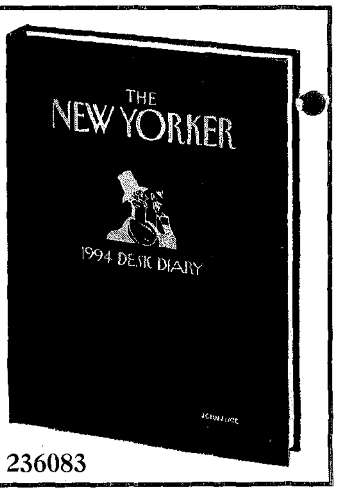
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THE CRITICS

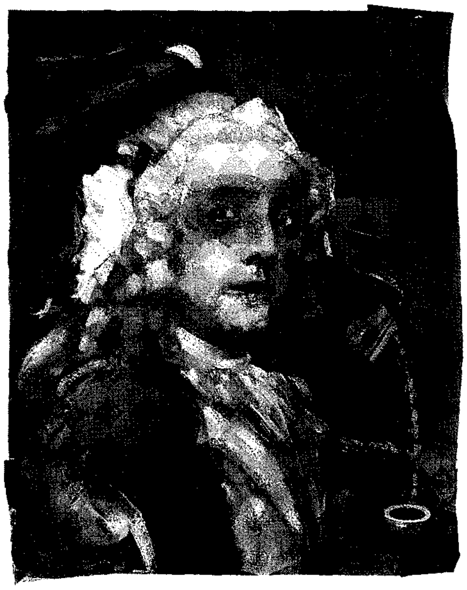
BOOKS

SEX AND REVOLUTION

BY FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

On a Sunday morning in 1768, the Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, a twenty-seven-year-old descendant of France's ancient nobility, accosted Rose Keller, a beggar, on a Paris street and persuaded her to accompany him to his country villa by offering her domestic employment. Upon arriving, the Marquis locked Rose Keller in an isolated room and pushed her, face down, onto a bed. He tied her to the bedposts, gagged her with a fur muff, and whipped her with a knotted cord until she bled, frequently pouring sealing wax into her wounds. The Marquis increased the ferocity of his lashings whenever his victim moaned, threatening to kill her. Then, after a series of particularly severe blows, he suddenly stopped and, according to his victim's later testimony, began to "shriek very fearfully and loudly." The Marquis de Sade had come to orgasm—an experience that he dedicated himself to perfecting, in manners more often than not bizarre, for much of his life as a free man.

That same evening, Rose Keller escaped the Marquis's custody and told the world her story. And within a week young Sade began one of many jail terms he would serve for his sexual excesses. But retribution never led him to repent or to reform. The Marquis's innate recklessness and his apparent need for continual punishment suggest the intimate links between masochism and the neurosis that bears his name. He spent seven months in jail for the *affaire Keller*, and within a few years he was brought to trial again and incurred yet another jail term, for sating his lust far more extravagantly in Marseilles. There he was sodomized by his valet while alternately copulating with, whipping, and being whipped by three prostitutes, to whom he had fed homemade aphrodisiac candies. A fourth prostitute with whom he sported later that day was made quite ill by the sweets. And barely a year passed before the Marquis, whose advances very few women of any station in life ever refused, further provoked outrage by eloping with his wife's sister, who was a virgin and a canoness. The public disgrace that followed did not deter him from organizing, at his family mansion in Provence, an orgy lasting several months, whose repercussions were instrumental in his being imprisoned yet again, this time for twelve years.



This fateful debauch, held in the winter of 1774-75, involved a score of persons under the age of fifteen, who were presumably hired as domestic servants and were made to participate in the Marquis de Sade's meticulously programmed bacchanals. Cooks, chambermaids, an adolescent male secretary, and the deeply enamored and docile Marquise de Sade herself all spent many winter weeks at the secluded château of La Coste enacting the fantasies of the imperious Marquis: he dictated the choice of partners, choreographed their couplings, controlled their emissions. The revel ended when the families of the children filed suit, and Sade's in-laws had him committed to a series of jails—Vincennes and, later, the Bastille. That is how he became a writer. While Sade was at the Bastille, he wrote his first major book, "The 120 Days of Sodom." A monumental catalogue of sexual perversions, it was written in a microscopic hand on a strip of paper four inches wide and forty feet long; like his subsequent books, it attempted to re-create in his imagination the relatively more modest depravities he had once known in the flesh.

For the rest of his life, Sade lived fairly chastely, but always under threat of persecution. After the French Revolution, he enjoyed a decade of comparative freedom, but in 1801 he was incarcerated for life, because of the prurience of his books. The longest confinement of all—the silencing of Sade's œuvre—began after his death, in 1814. This imprisonment lasted into the twentieth century. With the exception of a few visionary mavericks (Flaubert, Baudelaire, Swinburne, Apollinaire), even the more enlightened literati saw the Marquis as little more than "a professor emeritus of crime," and judged his writings to be "a frenetic and abominable assemblage of all crimes and of all obscenities."

If Sade deserves our scrutiny, it is not only because his anarchic, paranoid despair, the raw grandeur of his style, and his determination to disturb and to repel have been powerful forces in shaping modern sensibility. Many of us are also drawn to him out of a sense of justice: no court of law ever found Sade guilty of more than sodomy or of "debauchery and immoderate libertinage"; and most of his decades of physical and textual confinement were caused by the ferocity of his imagination rather than by his misdeeds. His, in fact, was an exemplary contemporary destiny: he was jailed without trial for transgressions that existed primarily in his fictions.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, when the modernist movement liberated and rehabilitated "the phallus-man," as Swinburne referred to Sade, his vindication was carried to euphoric extremes. Apollinaire called him "the freest spirit who ever lived"; Surrealists such as André Breton and Paul Éluard carried on about his "perfect pessimism"; Sade's stated belief that all sexual fantasies originate "in the mother's womb" led Freudians to hail him as one of their earliest prophets; Aldous Huxley revered him as "the one completely consistent and thoroughgoing revolutionary of history." The recovery, in 1929, of the original manuscript of "The 120 Days of Sodom," which was presumed to have been destroyed during the French Revolution (it was found in a private collection in Germany), gave Sade's devotees fresh impetus. His pioneer biographers—Maurice Heine, in the nineteen-thirties, and Gilbert Lely, in the forties and fifties—argued that this "most lucid hero in the history of thought" was martyrized with life imprisonment "for a mere spanking," and that "all works signed by Sade are about love."

There has clearly been a need for a saner middle ground in our estimation of Sade—for a balance between priggish censure and inane hagiography. "Sade: A Biography," by the French literary historian Maurice Lever, excellently translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $35), achieves precisely that balance. Lucidly written and admirably objective, critical of Sade's human transgressions and respectful of his literary gifts, this is the first book on the Marquis published in English since Geoffrey Gorer's "The Life & Ideas of the Marquis de Sade" (1963) to bring new insights into this most perplexing personality of Western literature.

Gahan Wilson

"Look, at least we're talking."

Lever, who is a research director at one of France's most distinguished academic institutions, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, had the good fortune to be granted access to many unpublished documents belonging to Sade's descendants. And he skillfully emphasizes those bizarre aspects of Donatien Alphonse François de Sade's background which helped to forge his singular sexuality and character: the feudal pride and arrogance bred into him by his ancient lineage (although their profligacy led to constant penury, the Sades never let anyone forget that they had been ennobled in the Middle Ages or that they owned half of Provence); and the perennial absence of his cold, distant mother, who immured herself in a convent when her son was a small child, and whose aloofness may have caused what Lever calls "Sade's negative Oedipus complex"—his paranoid hatred of all maternal figures. Lever also stresses the young Marquis's close relationship with his father—a bisexual, eccentric, debauched diplomat who doted on his only son—and Donatien's equally close bond with his notoriously dissipated uncle Abbé de Sade, a whoremongering cleric whose household the young Sade described as "a seraglio . . . better still . . . a bordello."

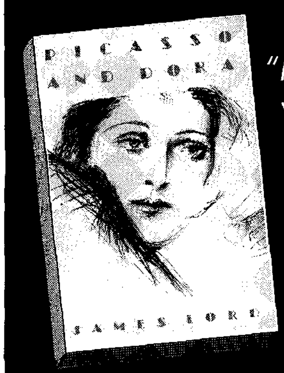
Lever cites still other aspects of Donatien's childhood which may have incited his actual and fictional perversions. Between the ages of five and ten, he lived with his uncle the abbé and a harem of lewd women in one of his family's numerous estates, an isolated castle in the vicinity of Avignon, which had few amenities beyond a large collection of pornographic literature. He [illegible]s then sent to the prestigious Jesuit school Collège Louis-le-Grand, in Paris. There he grew intensely fond of amateur theatricals, a time-honored facet of Jesuit education; and his biographer speculates, somewhat hazardously, that it was also there that he acquired a taste for being whipped and for the practice of sodomy.

Yet Lever is often tenuous in his psychological treatment of Sade's childhood and adolescence. He emphasizes Sade's "complicitous" and "intertwining" relationship with his father, but cites no instances in which he displayed filial affection, and tells us next to nothing about when and why his mother cloistered herself. The biographer regains eloquence and authority when his subject reaches adulthood, offering particularly vivid portraits of the two women central to Sade's life—his wife, Renée-Pélagie, and his vindictive, brilliant mother-in-law, Mme. de Montreuil, who was known as la Présidente, because her husband presided over one of Paris's most important courts of law.

No authentic full-face portraits of Sade have survived. We can recreate his appearance only from contemporaries' descriptions. He was of "average" height, which in the eighteenth century meant approximately five feet two; he had a full, sensual mouth, blond hair, a somewhat round, handsome face. Whatever its particulars, the suave young Marquis's physique seems to have cast as great a spell over his wife and his mother-in-law as did his distinguished ancestry: the Sades' ancient lineage was so exalted that they socialized with members of the royal family, while the Montreuils were recently ennobled bourgeois of merchant stock—origins that the arrogant Donatien profoundly disdained. The marriage had been arranged, in 1763, by Sade's impoverished father, and few couples could have been more awkwardly matched; Renée-Pélagie was a resourceful, very plain, very pious young woman of twenty-one, masculine and austere in her demeanor and dress. But she remained insanely in love with her husband throughout the first twenty-six years of their marriage. And Sade's letters to his wife make it evident that, notwithstanding her piety and high-minded decorum, the couple regularly practiced sodomy, his favorite sexual workout. To quote one of the many forthright letters cited in Lever's biography: "Here's to a good screw up the ass. . . . You have a very pretty *misconstruction*, and a manner of moving and a narrowness . . . and heat in the *rectum*, that makes me get on with you quite well."

The Marquise, who enjoyed frequent enough conventional relations with her husband to conceive three children, had to tolerate far more than his bedtime habits. Her serene acceptance of his innumerable liaisons with actresses, courtesans, and whores of all varieties merely showed her shrewdness and tact; such capers were all too customary among the libertine eighteenth-century aristocracy. But the Marquise's fortitude was far more extensive: on the occasions when the Marquis was pursued by the law for some especially lurid act, she acted as his most stalwart protector. These occasions were numerous, because Sade's sexual ideal was to whip and be whipped while simultaneously engaging in passive and active sodomy; he employed a substantial number of participants in these acrobatics, so his revels were frequently reported. (Simone de Beauvoir has speculated that Sade's sexual extremism was motivated by the unusually frenzied nature of his orgasms, whose para-mystical effects were comparable to those of "an epileptic seizure.")

Throughout his escapades, the Marquise de Sade hid her husband's traces from the police and ceaselessly petitioned authorities to grant him clem-



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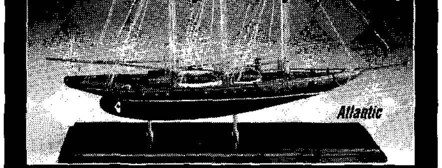

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ency. What is most remarkable is that Renée-Pélagie de Sade tolerated, if not abetted, Sade's affair with her own sister, and generally procured for him: this prim, reserved young noblewoman helped her husband recruit the youngsters involved in the lengthy debauch held at La Coste, and she probably participated in the orgies herself.

Sade's relationship with his wife provides the most affecting portions of Lever's book; he examines the mystery of their relationship more sensitively than any earlier biographer. "In carrying out tasks that could not have been more contrary to her nature," he writes, "she displayed a kind of lucid grace as remote from cynicism as it was from martyrdom." He suggests that Mme. de Sade's complicity with the Marquis's perversions—a complicity that other biographers have sloughed off as mere masochism—sprang from far more complex sources: from her intuition that behind her spouse's insolent façade lurked a helpless, unloved child who would perish without her support; from her pragmatic notion that it was more decorous to keep scandals confined to her home than to allow them to erupt outside; and, most fascinating of all, from some inebriating sense that her husband had led her to live "above the law, both human and divine, above other women, even above herself."

Lever is equally eloquent in his treatment of Sade's mother-in-law, the formidable Présidente de Montreuil, whose hostility to her son-in-law from 1772 on seems all the more complex in light of the love and support she had offered him in the first decade of his marriage. At first, she had endured Sade's debauches as calmly as her daughter, bribing police to wipe his name off the records, using her considerable influence at court to bail him out of jail. Her tolerance broke down only upon Donatien's seduction of his sister-in-law, the Présidente's younger daughter. From then on, these two—the reckless, unleashed, anarchist Sade and the scheming, prudent, unfailingly self-controlled Présidente—were like "two wild beasts squared off for a fight to the finish." Summing up Donatien's relations with the venomous Présidente, Lever says, "For the first and only time in his life, he had met someone as brutal as he, and as unscrupulous, but infinitely more shrewd."

Capitalizing on the scandal aroused by the Marseilles incident, which officially resulted in charges of sodomy and poisoning, the Présidente personally brought about the twelve-year jail term that Sade began to serve in 1778. She persuaded Louis XVI to issue that most hated legislative tool of the ancien régime, a lettre de cachet—a decree that circumvented the judicial system and could incarcerate any citizen for life without a trial. (Powerful nobles frequently used such decrees to settle accounts with their more bothersome relatives.)

In the Bastille, to which he was transferred from Vincennes in 1784, Sade lived in a tower ironically called Liberty. He had a relatively luxurious room, equipped with his own furniture, wall hangings, carpets, and paintings, and with a vast library, which included his editions of Homer, Virgil, Voltaire, and Captain Cook. His letters from jail were filled with requests for all kinds of creature comforts, and also with vituperations against the warden, diatribes against any form of authority, and demented invectives against his mother-in-law ("infernal monster," "venomous beast," "bloody trollop").

The devoted Renée-Pélagie, who had moved into a convent and broken off most relations with her mother, responded to her husband's demands and rantings with unflagging devotion. She satisfied his gluttony with the rarest gourmet foods (he would grow very obese during his prison term), and even oversaw the manufacture of custom-made wooden dildos, with which the Marquis sodomized himself during his confinement. He specified that they must be "six inches in circumference by eight or nine inches long." In coded diaries that he kept in jail he referred to his orgasms as *prestiges*, and recorded that in one particular twenty-seven-month period he had enjoyed a phenomenal total of 6,536 "introductions." (Sade had an obsession with numbers which his biographers tend to trace to his anal personality: during his Marseilles orgy he kept engraving on a mantelpiece the number of lashings he had just received.)

However much he psychologically abused his wife, the Marquis seems to have felt tenderness and gratitude toward her. In his letters to her, his philippics against the outside world alternate with such personal endearments as "my little mother," "Mohammed's ecstasy," "my doggie," "fresh pork of my thoughts," "seventeenth planet of space," "miracle of nature," "dove of Venus," "ambrosia of Olympus," "light of my life," and "my baby."

As for Renée-Pélagie, she continued to address her husband as her "good little boy" until the year before his liberation from jail, when she made a baffling about-face. Apparently reconquered by her formidable mother and by the teachings of the Church, she suddenly began to persecute her spouse as fiercely as she had once defended him. After paying him a series of visits at the Bastille shortly before the Revolution, the Marquise de Sade never saw the Marquis again, notwithstanding his pleas for a meeting. Her enmity continued until her death, in 1810.

LEVER'S is a narrative rather than an interpretative biography. He provides little fresh insight into Sade's texts, and is clearly most at ease documenting the sociopolitical setting of his subject's life. He takes pains to emphasize that the extraordinarily loose mores of eighteenth-century France permitted numerous noblemen who had committed transgressions far more outrageous and violent than Sade's to go scot-free. Some of his most fascinating pages concern the decade of near-liberty that Sade enjoyed after April, 1790, when the National Assembly freed all prisoners who had been incarcerated through the institution of the lettre de cachet. Shortly after being sprung, Sade dropped the "de" that implied a noble birth, and was reborn, aged fifty, as Citizen Louis Sade, Man of Letters. Although he was at heart a constitutional monarchist and a consummate élitist, he donned the red cap of the most radical insurgents and pledged his devotion to the Revolution. A gifted actor, he simulated such Jacobinic zeal that he soon rose to the presidency (somewhat akin to a mayorship) of one of the "reddest" administrative districts of Paris—the area called Section des Piques, which was centered on the Place Vendôme, and which boasted Robespierre himself as a member.

There was another, equally astounding transformation in the life of Citizen Sade. Upon leaving jail, he declared that sexuality now disgusted him and that he was flirting with the thought of becoming a Trappist monk. Short of totally renouncing the body, Louis Sade soon began a tranquil, loyal, and probably platonic relationship with an intelligent and altogether remarkable woman seventeen years his junior, Marie-Constance Quesnet, whom he called Sensible, or "the sensitive lady." She was as shrewdly protective of Sade, as passionately dedicated to him, as his wife had once been. She remained at his side for the next quarter of a century, until his death.

But to make ends meet during the mayhem of the Revolution, Citizen Sade needed more than luck in love. His family mansion, La Coste, had been sacked by insurgent peasants, and, since he had carefully hidden the fact that he was one of Provence's largest landowners, he could not touch the revenue from any of his estates. So he indulged in his passion for the stage, writing melodramas and tragedies that had brief runs at the Paris theatres. Through much of the seventeen-nineties, he also remained solvent by publishing (in strict anonymity) the prurient novels for which he is most famous: "Justine," "Juliette," and the particularly savage "La Philosophie dans le Boudoir," in which the young heroine, revenging herself against her hated mother, rapes her with a dildo, watches her being raped again and sodomized by a syphilitic valet, and sews up both orifices to insure the onset of infection. (There has never been doubt in any reader's mind that the detested mother is modelled on the Présidente de Montreuil.)

Lever emphasizes that the Revolution revealed several admirable aspects of Sade's character, including his frequent decency in nonsexual matters. During his term as the president of Section des Piques, for instance, he took legal steps to spare the lives of his despised in-laws, the Montreuils. With characteristic hauteur, he offered them no more than his scorn: "They are . . . acknowledged scoundrels, criminals whom I could ruin with a word if I chose," he wrote. "I pay them back with contempt and in-

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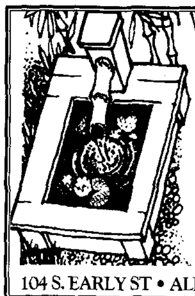

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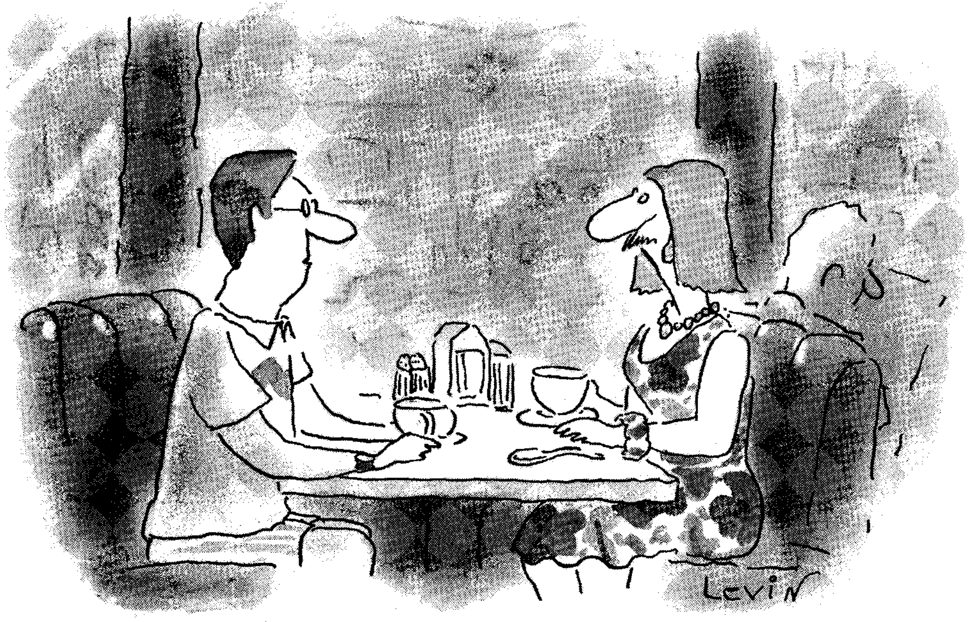

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difference for all the harm they have done me." Shortly thereafter, at the height of Robespierre's carnage, Sade refused to vote for a measure decreeing yet more executions of suspect citizens. (He was militantly opposed to capital punishment, and, in his biographer's words, would "vomit with disgust" at the very idea of a guillotine.) He was punished for his clemency by being jailed for eight months, on grounds of "moderatism," and sentenced to death. Sade escaped the guillotine only by a hairsbreadth: the very day he was to be executed at Robespierre's orders, the tyrant was deposed by a coup, and all his death warrants were repealed.

Sade's freedom did not last long. Napoleon's ascendance to power imposed a new puritanism on the nation, and Sade was increasingly jeopardized by rumors that he was the author of "books that are read with one hand," as the French once referred to pornography. Again on the lam from authorities, he ended the seventeen-nineties in miserable squalor, often living on public charity, occasionally earning a few cents as a prompter in suburban theatres, and devotedly taking care of Sensible's son from a previous marriage while she earned a pittance as a domestic. And then he was imprisoned again, this time for good. In April, 1801, upon Napoleon's orders, the sixty-year-old Marquis was committed to the insane asylum of Sainte-Pélagie, and later he was moved to the asylum of Charenton. He found his principal solace there in staging theatrical performances, drawing his cast, in part, from the inmates. He served as the troupe's "artistic director," and for some years these performances were the rage of Paris society, playing repeatedly to full houses.

Sade was too much of an egotist ever to have had any friends.(Unlike other libertines of his time, he did not share his debauches with any males other than his valets.) His children—a daughter and two sons—toward whom he had always had conflicting emotions of pride and hatred, were either inimical or indifferent to him. Yet, ironically, Sade's last decade was far less lonely than many previous years. Sensible, who pretended that she was his daughter and was allowed to live in a room next to his in Charenton, remained loyal to the end, even when he reverted to his earlier caprices and began carnal relations with a fifteen-year-old girl to whom he was genuinely and paternally devoted. The child seemed to return the fat old codger's affection, and Sade was most puritanical about her upbringing, not allowing her to attend public baths or parties.

THROUGHOUT this riveting biography, Lever continually underscores the most significant trait of Sade's personality: his willful, almost autistic solitude—that monstrous denial of human interconnectedness which led him to see sexual perversions as the most valid modes of communication. ("My neighbor is nothing to me" and "Any enjoyment is weakened when shared," he once wrote.) Yet one ends this splendid book with a sense of incompleteness, for the biographer fails to engage himself fully with a central issue—Sade's writings themselves.

Rereading "The 120 Days of Sodom," one realizes how little Sade's works have to do with the most traditional definition of pornography: inciting humans to the act of copulation. Although his books share the earmarks of all smut—the mythification and mechanization of the flesh—their motivations are far more complex and cerebral. On the structural level, Sade's œuvre can be seen as a highly Cartesian, para-scientific exercise in propelling certain human impulses [illegible] their most far-fetched conclusions; on the political and moral level, the Sadean world, liberated, as it is, of all taboos, can be viewed as a commentary on the ultimate social consequences of the parricidal upheaval of 1789—of its radical uprooting of traditional familial relations. How many forms of incest can be practiced simultaneously, Sade asks in "The 120 Days of Sodom," having raged throughout his life against all forms of family bonds. He narrates the antics of a nobleman who has programmed three generations of incestuous relations so geometrically that "in fucking [his daughter] he fucked his sister . . . and his daughter-in-law, and . . . also constrained his son to fuck his own sister and mother-in-law."

Sade's work can also be seen as an exercise in fabulism. Throughout his grotesque fantasies—pell-mell orgies held in phantasmagoric spaces of Piranesian dimensions, foot-long penises eight inches in circumference, women whose three-inch clitorises enable them to function like men, banquet centerpieces composed of "six burning candles, each inserted in the ass of a naked girl lying upon the dining table"—one hears the voice of a ribald Surrealist more often than that of a depraved libertine. And if the Marquis's writings continue to fascinate us it is because they are cast in the archetypal fantasy structures of great fairy tales. Silling, the inaccessible fortress where the sinister debauches of "The 120 Days of Sodom" are played out, has the awesome spell of those evil places to which children, in innumerable frightening fables, are threatened with banishment.

But Lever largely neglects Sade's surreal aesthetics and also the metaphysical underpinnings of his work. Sade had a satanically pessimistic view of life, in which he sought to transcend the evil he saw prevailing in the world by, as he had one of his characters say, "*masturbating* nature . . . insulting it . . . outraging it." Moreover, Lever fails to address the issue of Sade's literary form. How does Sade's œuvre relate to the vast tradition of pornographic literature that flourished in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France? To what degree might it have been a parody of it, as many of us sense that it was? To what extent did this voracious scholar and reader draw for his grotesque sexual effects on Jonathan Swift, whose works he regarded highly, or on Aretino's erotic writings? Such crucial issues are left untouched, as is a topic central to the interests of most contemporary readers—the role of women in the Sadean system.

Sade's program to liberate women from all patriarchal structures of family and marriage is far more clear-cut than the rest of his tenuous anarchist politics: "Charming gender, you will be free," he writes in "La Philosophie dans le Boudoir." "You will enjoy the raptures offered you by nature fully as much as men." In the same book, Madame de Saint-Ange instructs her fifteen-year-old ward, Eugénie, to "fuck, dear, fuck away": "That's what you've been put on earth for . . . your body is your own, only your own." But the singular social contract Sade offers us in his revolutionary boudoir has an important caveat: in exchange for the freedom of not belonging to any one man, and of making love to whomever she wishes, each woman has the duty of giving herself to any man who desires her. *Liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*, but no *sororité:* the brothers, as usual, get a better deal than the sisters. This free-form prostitution, not necessarily any less heinous than our millennial patriarchal repressions, is as bizarre as every other aspect of Sade's vision. But then he *knew* precisely how bizarre, intolerable, and unsociable he was, and it's because of his absolute candor that those of us who have wished to liberate the Marquis from a century of censorship and silence accept his peculiarities. "Extreme in all things, with a disturbance in the moral imagination unlike any the world has known," he wrote. "Kill me or take me as I am, because I will not change." ♦

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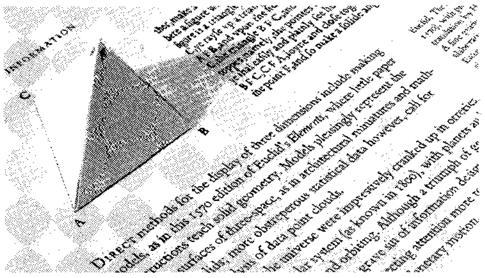

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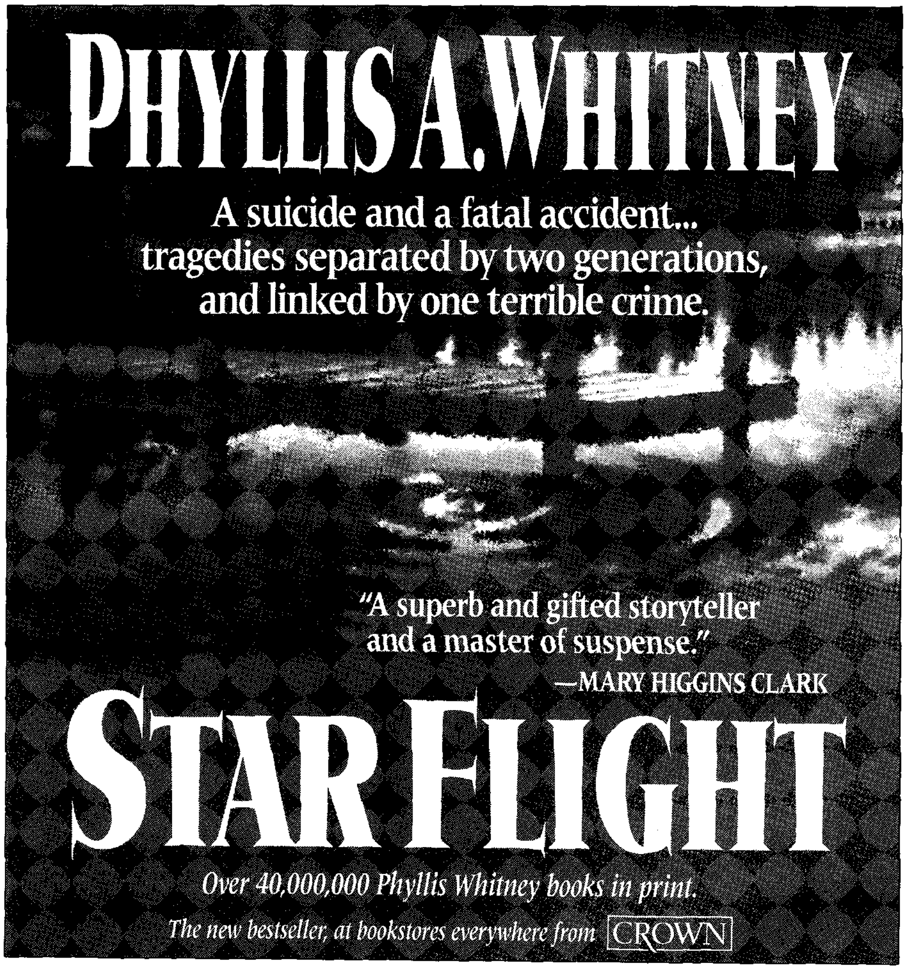
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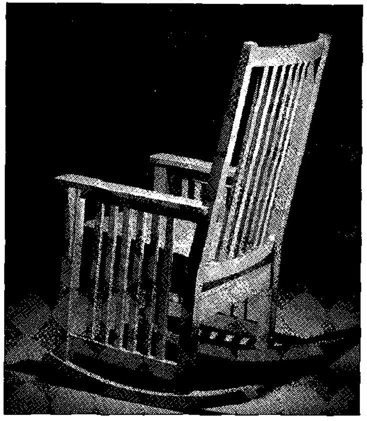

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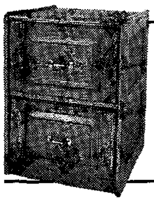

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FOLLOWING THE LEADER

BY ANTHONY LANE

"TITO AND ME," written and directed by Goran Marković, is set in Belgrade in 1954. The "me" in question is Zoran (Dimitrje Vojnov), only ten years old but already boasting a waistline that would flatter a lifelong glutton. He lives in a small apartment with far too many relatives—his parents, grandmother, aunt, and uncle, plus his poisonous young cousin, Svetlana. She labels him a degenerate—hardly your average playground banter, but then, this is old Yugoslavia, where every tongue is trained in the Communist lingo. "My uncle said the same thing," Zoran says mournfully, "when he caught me eating the wall." And there he is, digging plaster out with a spoon and giving it a thoughtful chew. As the camera stands back to survey the telltale craters, you realize that Marković is not in the nostalgia business. Far from being a placid memoir of youth, "Tito and Me" buzzes with casual surrealism, with the grave, inexplicable gestures that compose the rites of a child.

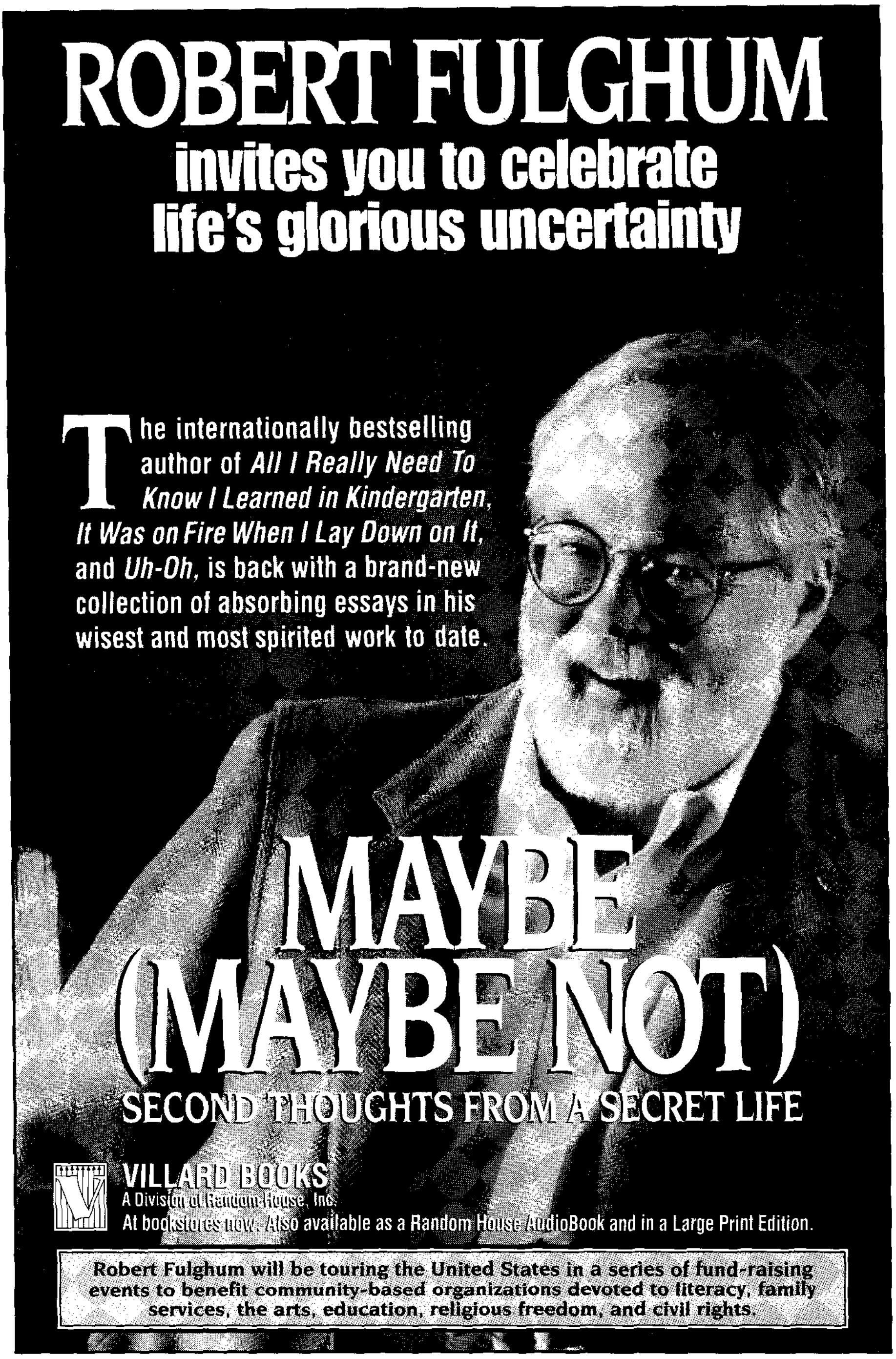
Zoran is possibly the least mercurial boy in the history of movies. He is stubborn, solid, gullible, and about as elfin as a dump truck. The movie is a marvellous rebuff to the notion that all children are unfettered spirits, as yet untarred by prejudice; Zoran is the perfect petit bourgeois, set to swell into a *bourgeois énorme* as time goes by. As his parents fall onto their bed, we see him lying in the next room, plainly irritated by the noise of endearments, and reaching for cotton to plug his ears. And when he stands in the living room, squat and charmless, Marković films him from a slightly low angle, to emphasize his self-possession. Later on, in shorts and suspenders, he looks more a Bavarian burgomaster than a small boy. We laugh at the idea that he so rarely smiles, but his precocious solemnity also gives us the creeps, and the film finds an ideal focus for our unease: Zoran is gripped by hero worship, and the hero is Marshal Tito.

Tito's place in the world's memory seems unstable: for every historian who acclaims the hero of the wartime partisans and the best hope of the Allies, there will be another who is more concerned with the precise transgressions of his long rule. At present, while the country that he held together proceeds to disembowel itself, his standing may well have risen; according to an impassioned but rather deluded logic, anything—even dictatorship—would be better than this spilled blood. Odd though it may sound, "Tito and Me" makes a useful footnote to the debate, for it remains honestly undecided about the past. Although filming began just after the start of hostilities in 1991, the film shows no hint of the current conflict; it appears slender, and eager to charm. Yet that very gentleness, its light air of mockery, illuminates the old regime with surprising clarity where a glare of anguish might have been too fierce.

During the opening credits, and many times from then on, we see newsreel footage of the Marshal enjoying the reverence of his people—standard propaganda, which would seem openly threatening if it were accompanied by a Wagnerian march or a strident patch of Richard Strauss. Instead, Marković backs it with a nippy little samba number, the kind of thing you hear in Doris Day films whenever Doris goes shopping. It's a lovely device; it suggests that those cheering crowds may indeed have been having a nice day out, but it also shrugs at the silly pretensions of power. As in all decent political satire, the sharpest digs make the best gags: when Zoran writes a prize-winning poem that ends with the line "I love Tito more than Mum and Dad," we cut to a shot of his desperate father lying in bed and reading Freud's "Psychopathology of Everyday Life." It makes you feel for this careworn, cultivated man. How can he possibly have spawned such an ungrateful lump?

Zoran is not alone, of course, in his love for Tito; everyday life has indeed become psychopathic when millions of citizens are devoted to a man with orange-dyed hair whom they have never met. Marković, in his mild way, is posing the crucial question: Under repression, can we rely on the intimacy of friends and relatives to provide our last recourse to full humanity, or will a good dictator always find his way into our bloodstream, and even touch our hearts? Zoran's teacher, certainly, looks to be in the full flush of sexual excitement as she chants the liturgy of political myth: "The life of the young Tito wasn't easy at all. He had to get up very early and go to bed very late." Tears prick her eyes as she announces that Zoran, one of *her* pupils, has won a place on a two-week trek around the Marshal's homeland. You can't help wondering what the runner-up will get. Three weeks, maybe.

Once the trek gets under way, unfortunately, the movie loses steam. Until now, Marković 's camera has tended to prowl around Zoran's apartment, nosing out family feuds and incidental details—a whole bright basket of red peppers, a dead deer slumped in the bath. From here on, however, it moves outside for a merry jaunt, and the comedy grows broad and blatant. We get a pair of tedious government agents, who really belong in an old Inspector Clouseau movie, and we get Raja (Lazar Ristovski), the zealot who leads his band of apprentices across the country. He picks on the hapless Zoran; their confrontation forms the core of the movie's second half, and it forces our hero to see the error of his ways. But I preferred those ways—Zoran the victim looks like any other tearful child, whereas Zoran the miniature bigot was strangely endear-



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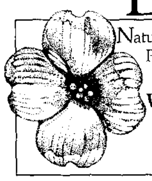

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ing. He was lost in his own world, in the newsreels that spooled through his tiny mind.

Happily, this sense of the unexpected returns at the climax of the film. Zoran stands on a podium and publicly recants his earlier judgment, issuing a list of people whom he in fact prefers to Marshal Tito: "I would particularly like to point out that I prefer my friends to you." Also favored are his parents, the "local loony," and "the gypsy who repairs the casseroles." It's a wonderful scene, because, although political justice has been restored, the sheer *oddness* of childhood remains intact. That gypsy is the kind of person whom David Copperfield would have noticed, and liked, and commemorated with a sudden, spirit-lifting mention in the course of his narrative. Zoran is as bullheaded as ever; we may find him more sympathetic as a consequence of his plight, but we're no nearer to reaching him. By the time the hikers are invited to meet the great dictator himself, Zoran has lost interest; he wanders away to prod the sweets and cakes, while, back in the reception hall, Tito—with equal, chilling delectation—pushes a lock of hair away from the forehead of an awed young girl.

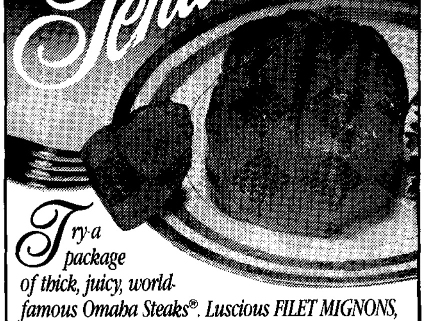
"Tito and Me" is too long and misshapen, but it stays with you, and makes you think back to all the children who have paraded across our screens. Cinema is such a sophisticated business—not just in its wealth or its patiently acquired skills but in its need to skirt the borders of cynicism in search of the right audience—that when faced with the promise of innocence it tends to lunge with embarrassing hunger, as though in need of redemption. That is why children have had such a raw deal: celluloid has enshrined them as incorruptibles. With "The Kid," Chaplin set a tone that can still be heard in the repellent, larky violence of the "Home Alone" movies; it is that of a child who is mischievous but never bad, and whose purity of spirit, treasured in closeup, is seriously considered an example to us all. Chaplin didn't just befriend the kid; he modelled his entire career on the conviction that it was enough to be lovable, not least in the urchinlike speed and cunning with which he fled the demands of adult life. (Keaton, too, knew that those demands were absurd, but he stood and met them head on, and took intricate, beautiful initiatives to fulfill them with good grace.)

Not for a moment did Chaplin doubt that a man, having put away childish things, could (and should) get them back. Movies like "Stand by Me" and "Cinema Paradiso" continue in this presumption, discovering within it fresh supplies of charm. But there is another tradition, dark and difficult by comparison, which digs its heels in and spurns such easy consolation. "The 400 Blows" is still the best film made about childhood, because it resounds with a schoolboy's inky, shin-kicking enthusiasm and at the same time yearns [illegible] bust free from the prison of youth. As an adult, Truffaut stands outside the bars, peering in and trying to remember what life was like inside, and wondering why so much of it should smack of pain.

"Tito and Me" is caught between these two strains; it captures old pleasures with ease, but wisely refuses to patronize its peculiar hero—or, indeed, to understand his motives. Zoran's obsession is well under way as the film begins, and he didn't inherit it from his parents, so where on earth did it come from? One can only respect Marković for struggling against the temptations of cuteness, even though he doesn't always win. His movie takes its place alongside "Empire of the Sun"—Spielberg's most underrated work—as a portrait of innocence carried to uncomfortable lengths; the English boy who thrilled to the spectacle of Japanese pilots, all enmity brushed aside by wonder, would know just how the Yugoslavian boy feels, sitting in the dark and rehearsing the mannerisms of Marshal Tito. If the film reserves judgment on that epoch and the mania that it bred—well, there's nothing wrong with mixed feelings, not in a place where unmixed ones are firing men up to murder their neighbors. Zoran would be almost fifty by now, and much less fat, and probably dead. ♦

Pop star Whitney Houston will make her first Southern California concert appearance since the birth of her daughter at the Hollywood Bowl on August 22.—*Los Angeles Times.*

She's probably been trying to figure out how to top her last show.



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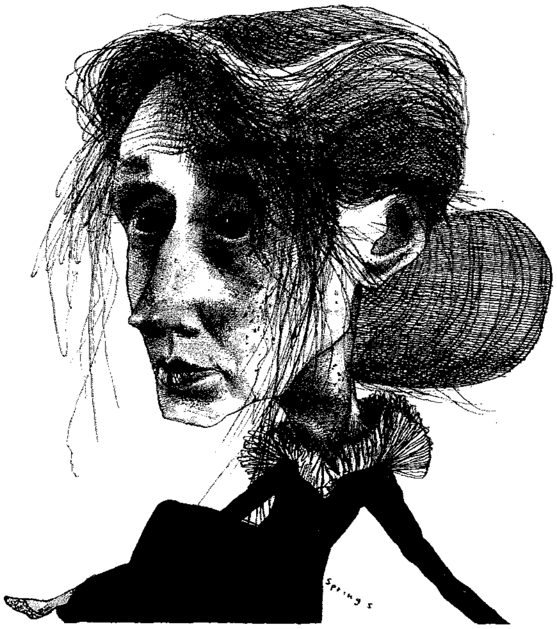
BLOOMSBURY FOOL

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

PERHAPS we should, after all, be afraid of Virginia Woolf, or at least cautious. The disappointments of Libby Larsen's "Mrs. Dalloway" opera—bravely introduced by Lyric Opera Cleveland as the first full-length new work in its repertory—may not be the same disappointments as those of Sally Potter's "Orlando" movie, but both efforts make us wonder how and why anyone should have thought Woolf translatable.

Transposing a book into another medium usually implies a realist view of literature, a view that words on a page are the token of experiences—sights, sounds, talking voices, incidents, characters—that can be retrieved by other means. But though this may be all very well if you're dealing with Michael Crichton, Woolf's mature novels are directed firmly, even self-consciously, in the other direction, toward an ideal of literature that doesn't speak about reality so much as mirror it in complexity of form, a literature of words, words, words. What happens in "Mrs. Dalloway," in terms of narrated events and feelings, is mostly trivial—except, signally, for the suicide of Septimus Warren Smith, which only reinforces the point by contrast. The people to whom these nothings happen are bubbles, too. What matters in the book is the sense of the simultaneity of unrelated things—present incidents and memories, sense impressions and emotions, continuing purposes and ephemera—to all of which the narrative is mysteriously privy as it froths and hurries on, a superior gossip.

Creating an opera out of all this is a bit like trapping a cloud in order to make ice cubes: the material is there, for sure, but it's spread through a whole lot else, and the manufacturing process changes it beyond all recognition. Besides, there are easier sources of narrative water. One can imagine a "Mrs. Dalloway" symphony—the book itself, no doubt by design, seems to mimic symphonic form with its recurrent themes, its distinct movements, and its passages of development—much more readily than a "Mrs. Dalloway" opera. Nevertheless, Bonnie Grice, working a few years back as a radio journalist in the Cleveland area, insisted the thing was possible, and managed to convey her conviction first to Michael McConnell, the Lyric Opera's administrator and stage director, and then to Libby Larsen, whose job it would be, as the composer, to make Mrs. Dalloway's day into two hours in the theatre.



Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" becomes a new opera.

JOHN SPRINGS

To judge from the resulting piece, Ms. Grice's belief in the project rested on at least four matters: the interpenetration of past and present in the book, the prominence in it of sound (the chimes of Big Ben, a distant military band, a vagrant's song), the prominence, too, of contemplative interior monologues, and the subjoining of such streams of silent thought to voiced speech in the rare sequences of dialogue. But these are all

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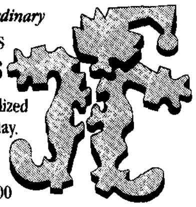

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fingerposts pointing backward to the novel's emergence from thoughts about music, not forward to a realization in opera. For instance, there's a deal of difference, as any music critic should know, between reading about sound and hearing it. Sounds in the book are part of the braid. In an opera, when they're heard from the stage, or the pit, or a tape (used to give a muffled projection to the band), they have a raw actuality.

Nowhere did this matter more than in the madwoman's song. Woolf introduces this as an interruption, and for a moment we don't know where it's coming from, this "voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth." But it loses all its potential of mystery, of a welling up, when we can see straight away that it's being uttered by a bag lady. The result was less a realization of the passage than a critique of its pretentiousness, which doesn't seem to have been what Ms. Grice and Ms. Larsen intended. (Perhaps that's one way in which a "Mrs. Dalloway" opera could have been brought about: from a position of antagonism.)

In the context of the whole piece, this scene is crucial but brief. More continuously dismaying is what has happened to the busy lines of internal communication that make up the bulk of the book. In Woolf, the tempo was presto verboso, but all the traditions of reflectiveness in music lead Ms. Larsen to a predominant andante. Besides deadening the pace, this means that far less can be said, so that mental butterflies become snails, rotating—if this is what a snail would ever do—within the same small territory. Then, when unspoken thoughts are intermingled with spoken dialogue—at the one juncture in the libretto where you think a real operatic scene is going to be possible, where the genre waits encouragingly with a whole history in its hand of examples of music undercutting what people say—Ms. Grice and Ms. Larsen come up with a ramshackle new convention, whereby supposedly silent thoughts are differentiated from voiced sentiments in going at a different tempo, while the conversing singers have to just pretend that they hear one lot of words but not another. This is a wasted opportunity and, theatrically, a disaster. It's also indicative of the problems that will arise when quasi-operatic literary material is made to sing. If the point was to emulate what Woolf accomplished, it might have been better to read the book, imbibe its lessons, and write something new.

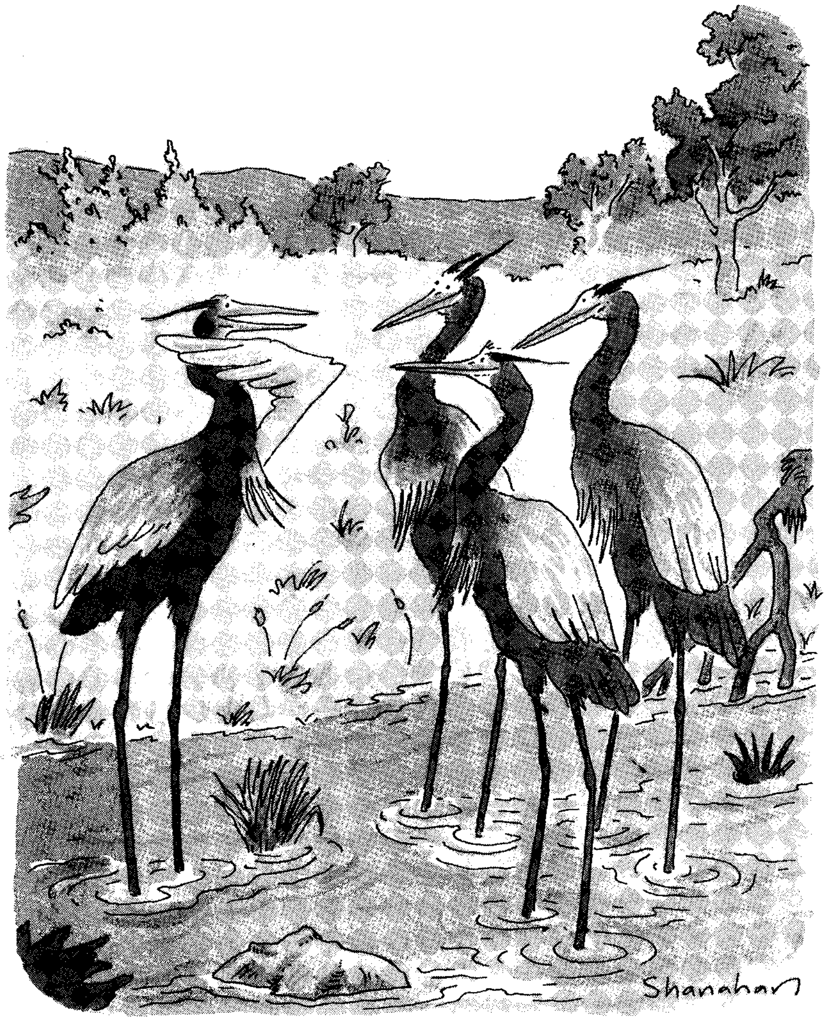
Instead, Ms. Grice's extraction from the novel left us with a sentimental reunion (that of Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh), a sentimental memory (Clarissa's light flirtation with Sally Seton), and a sentimental melodrama (Septimus's suicide while his wife is arguing with his doctor). All these Ms. Larsen dutifully set, without any particular show of enthusiasm, for soloists accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble: a couple of woodwinds, a string quintet, percussion, and electronic keyboards. The right buttons were pressed: expressionism and eeriness for Septimus, waltzes for love remembered and regretted, neoclassicism for civilization (an odd touch this, and largely forgotten after Mrs. Dalloway's first stepping out), warm but loose-limbed tonality for the Sally-Clarissa episode, contortions of "God Save the Queen" for England. There was nothing wrong with any of it, and nothing very right.

Ms. Larsen herself has struck at the problem in suggesting that what's missing is the narrator, and in hoping that this spectral figure, which necessarily disintegrates when the characters come to walk free and sing for themselves, would be reassembled in the orchestra pit. That, however, would need a Wagner, which Ms. Larsen is not, and doesn't try to be: the talent she displays in this opera (one of several she has done) is for apt accompaniment, for a kind of musical theatre in which voices dominate, instruments normally supply no more than punctuation and a wisp of connectedness, and all musical fires are sternly tamed to the requirements of character, feeling, and atmosphere. Meanwhile, the narrative voice of the book, the voice that rushes and connects and poeticizes, is almost eliminated, except—and this is no help—when it's brought in to interfere with what the characters are meant to be saying. Close to the beginning, for example, Mrs. Dalloway has to run full tilt counter to herself by intoning words about Big Ben that are quoted almost verbatim from Woolf's narration: "First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air." This is just not how the lady thinks.

As disastrous as the loss of the narrator, though, is the loss of nearly all the minor characters. One feature of the book—perhaps its most realistic—is its evocation of city life, of the bustle and jumble of meaningless coincidences as people's paths race blindly across one another in the streets. Opera-company budgets are a bit of a drawback here. Out of Woolf's huge cast, the opera saves only eleven, of whom one, Elizabeth Dalloway, does not sing. (A pity more was not made of this.) Only the people who are essential to the Clarissa and Septimus plots are retained, and it's that concentration which makes the counterpointing of the two threads—Clarissa's life of poignant recollection and Septimus's imprisonment in memories of the Great War—appear crude and contrived. Besides, the wash of other characters and incidents is essential to the book's tone and technique, and without them we don't really have "Mrs. Dalloway" at all.

Nor did the opera really give us Mrs. Dalloway, for the title character—quite apart from her bizarre bursts of Woolfishness—became a slight, frail, and neurotic creature, perhaps for reasons that had to do less with Mary Elizabeth Poore's performance than with the transmutation. If you have to sing to yourself about how contented you are, then things must be pretty bad. Nor is the case helped if the music you have to sing is cheerless and flat, as it almost had to be, given the limp tempos and Ms. Larsen's professional but misdirected skill in sticking to easy conversational contours in setting most of the unassuming text.

But Septimus was a force, as musical madmen tend to be, and Gary Briggle was striking in the part: a strong lyric tenor with the rough grate of frayed emotions in his voice. There was also good, characterful singing, in problematic acoustics, from everyone else in the cast: the piece certainly didn't go down for want of effort from its crew. Mr.



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McConnell's staging reminded one, a little by default, that his first reaction to Ms. Grice's importuning was to counter that the book was a film, not an opera, and though the experience of "Orlando" might make one want to pause, he was more right than wrong. Even the finished score is full of short scenes, crosscuts, and dissolves, as well as hopeful stage directions that suggest screen closeup rather than opera-house distance. ("Clarissa realizes she doesn't pity Septimus. She feels somehow like him": try putting that across to people a couple of hundred feet away.) It was unfortunate, then, that Steven Perry's set—an interior with grand curves and azure paint, suggesting Paris rather than Westminster—so insisted on a stable and solid location.

Yet nothing could have saved the piece outside a wholesale rethinking, which makes it so much the sadder to learn that Ms. Larsen's first impulses were for something vastly livelier than she and her collaborator eventually produced. "I wanted all of the characters dressed as different birds, because at the time I was trying to understand who all of these individual people were in this same environment, like a bird in a sanctuary, which is London, and how these birds interact, flying from tree to tree," she is reported as saying. Maybe that doesn't sound like "Mrs. Dalloway," either, but it's an opera I want to hear and see. ♦

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Example 2 *A small funnel forming at the base of a cloud*

You are visiting friends in Kansas who live just a few miles from your house, and you have heard on the radio that a tornado watch has been issued.

You scan the sky and notice that a small funnel has formed at the base of a thick thunderstorm cloud overhead.

1. Turn to the Thumb Tab Guide. There you find a vortex-shaped silhouette, standing for the group Tornadoes and Other Whirls. The symbol refers you to the color plates 207-230.

2. You look at the color plates and quickly surmise that the funnel shape in the sky overhead may be the beginning stage of a tornado. The captions refer you to the text on pages 511-522.

3. Reading the text, you become convinced that there is a tornado forming. You and your friends immediately seek the storm shelter and wait for the threat to pass.—*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Weather.*

Too late, we're not in Kansas anymore.

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BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang

by Joyce Carol Oates
(Dutton; $21)

LEGS SADOVSKY, a beautiful girl who can also look like a beautiful boy, pulls together teen-age girlfriends from the downtrodden end of their upstate New York town to wreak revenge on exploiters. The girls publicly humiliate a teacher who molests a student and, along with other acts of bravery, cleverness, and natural justice, force a pet shop where the animals are mistreated out of business. But they also break store windows for the hell of it, and some of them are casually bigoted. A joyride in a car borrowed without permission lands Legs in the local reform school, where she is treated with special brutality for defending weaker girls. Like Legs, this book will take on practically anything—social justice, death, the meaning of life, and true, disinterested love. Written in a feverish, urgent tone and replete with emphatic typography, it is vivid and politically arousing, but, in its incantatory way, it is also, like classic myths, oddly impersonal.

Home Repairs

by Trey Ellis
(Simon & Schuster; $21)

THE author's second book takes the form of a diary, in which Austin McMillan—a brainy African-American kid who's trying to grow up as fast as possible—records his thoughts with a funky, necessity-is-the-mother-of-invention flair: a lingerie-clad woman "introspects" herself in a mirror; participating in extracurricular activities at prep school is "good college suck." Austin concentrates almost exclusively on his sexual coming of age, leaving other subjects—like race and the extra layer of difficulty it adds to all transactions—to take care of themselves. His attempt to attain mastery in just one area of study is a touching plea for reducing the problem of growing up to graspable dimensions: he heads almost every entry with the name of his current crush, as though each new woman represented a station where he might finally disembark from the hurtling train of selfhood and feel at ease. By the time he has graduated from college and landed in a career, dozens of names are inscribed in his diary and he is only slightly closer to getting off the train, but along the way he has picked up a great deal—mostly about the technical aspects of love. The book doesn't end so much as stop; it's disappointing to find the notebook full while Austin's quest for true love and maturity is still in progress.

GENERAL

Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend

by Carleton Mabee,
with Susan Mabee Newhouse
(New York University; $35)

THIS first-rate biography presents us with a heroine considerably more interesting—more original, more powerful—than the personality sentimentalists have often portrayed. Sojourner Truth named herself in 1843, when she started her career as a travelling evangelist. She was born a slave in the Hudson River Valley around 1797; her parents and her owners spoke Dutch, and her strongest African cultural inheritance seems to have been musical, in the way she sang hymns and the songs she composed. In 1829, two years after slaves were finally emancipated in New York State, she moved to New York City, and became involved in a religious cult led by a charlatan; when it broke up, she struck out on her own. She joined a short-lived utopian community in Massachusetts that had been founded by abolitionists, and after its financial collapse she added anti-slavery and women's rights to her Christian mission. In the decade before the Civil War, she became an impressive reform lecturer. Physically imposing (nearly six feet tall), she had a gift for pithy utterance; her insights are at once poetic and down to earth. After the Civil War, she helped resettle freedmen in the North and continued her crusade for women's rights. She died in 1883. Mabee builds our admiration for Sojourner fact by fact. She seems in advance of her time—and ours.

Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture

by William Leach
(Pantheon; $30)

BETWEEN 1880 and 1930, this history argues, American capitalism created a new culture that valued the consumption of material goods above any other human activity. Leach describes individuals (John Wanamaker, say) and explains how the techniques of temptation they developed—glamorous decoration and display in department stores, color printing, signs lit by electricity—contributed to the seduction of hitherto frugal Americans. Publicity men, museum curators, artists, and university specialists employed their skills to persuade Americans that buying things not only would make them happy but was morally right. The federal government helped, too: in the years when Herbert Hoover headed the Department of Commerce (1921-1928), American businesses received a host of expensive services and subsidies to help them sell one novelty or luxury after another. This animated jeremiad is packed with entertaining detail, but its thesis—at least, in the exaggerated and moralistic way Leach states it—is unpersuasive. It's hard to accept the availability of cut flowers in winter as a symptom of luxury that corrupts.

My Life as a Fan: A Memoir

by Wilfrid Sheed
(Simon & Schuster; $20)

WILFRID SHEED is that rare baseball fan for whom irony is not just a wild pitch from a control pitcher who finds himself in a jam. In "My Life as a Fan" there is baseball history—Sheed came into his fandom during the forties—and there is revenge, of a sort: the book is dedicated "against" Walter O'Malley, who moved the Dodgers from Brooklyn to Los Angeles. But Sheed is neither weepy nor sentimental. He keeps his intellect intact from start to finish, and what results is a distinctive portrait of the condition of sports fandom—how it feels to live inside what is at once a social and a solitary passion. "My Life as a Fan" is a perfect antidote to the end-of-season threnody, when all those announcers begin glutinizing as one over the homely virtues of the national pastime. ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

TIRED GUN

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

> "Let's assume I get struck by lightning and I end up in the U.S. Senate. I'm there for six years. What's the worst thing that could happen to me? I serve out my six years and I come back . . . and I write a book about it. And the book will sell!"
>
> —*Tom Clancy, in The Washington Post Magazine.*

SENATOR JACK RYAN stared at the papers on his desk. They were from the Government Printing Office, on North Capitol Street, between G and H Streets, and bore the characteristic "eagle" watermark. Ryan decided that the eagle was more like a turkey these days. This document made Ryan's stomach juices churn, and he yearned for a cigarette, but the pantywaists who made the laws had outlawed smoking, along with school prayer, so he would have to wait until he got to the cloakroom, where he liked to blow smoke in the faces of the women senators. Ryan liked women. His mother was a woman, and his wife was one, too, but it was madness that they were allowed to serve in combat or in the Senate.

The document was a second-degree amendment to a first-degree amendment closing the last military base in the United States. It mandated the confiscation of every last one of the two hundred million privately owned guns in the United States, even assault weapons used for shooting deer. He had filibustered against it for seventy-six hours. He was tired. He thought of Vietnam. Not that he had ever been to Vietnam, but he knew lots of people who had. Now another battle loomed, and Ryan had to summon every joule of energy in his weary musculature if it was to be won.

He cleared his throat and shouted, "Mr. President!"

All heads turned. A murmur of groans went up in the chamber. He was used to it. Ryan had been a thorn in their side for the past six years, and they could *not* wait for him to retire at the end of this term. He was not seeking reëlection. He was going to become a novelist and write manly sagas about big guns that could vaporize the human heart in milliseconds. Who needed *this*?

"Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland," said the president of the Senate, who, according to the Constitution, was also the Vice-President of the United States. He was a tree-hugging liberal who had smoked pot in his youth, but he had gone to Vietnam, so Ryan hated him a little less than he hated the others.

"I move for a quorum call," Ryan said. More groans.

"With respect to the distinguished gentleman," Senator Joe (Stalin) Biden, of Delaware, one of the most liberal men ever to sit in the United States Senate, said. He had had a hair transplant. Ryan had information from sources deep within the National Security Agency that the Soviets had implanted a microchip in Biden's skull while he was having the hair plugs put in, and so could now control virtually every piece of legislation that went through the Judiciary and Foreign Relations Committees. It didn't matter that the Soviet Union was now defunct, its heirs rattling the tin cup. Ryan knew that the Bear would be back. "Can we please just get *on* with it?" Biden said.

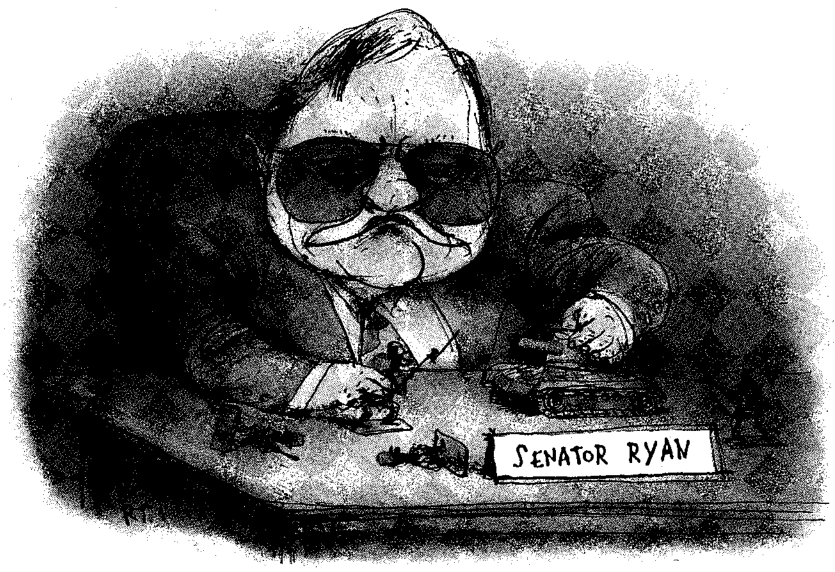
Ten more seconds. If only Ryan could hold on. He stood up again. "Mr. President, I move for a brief recess."

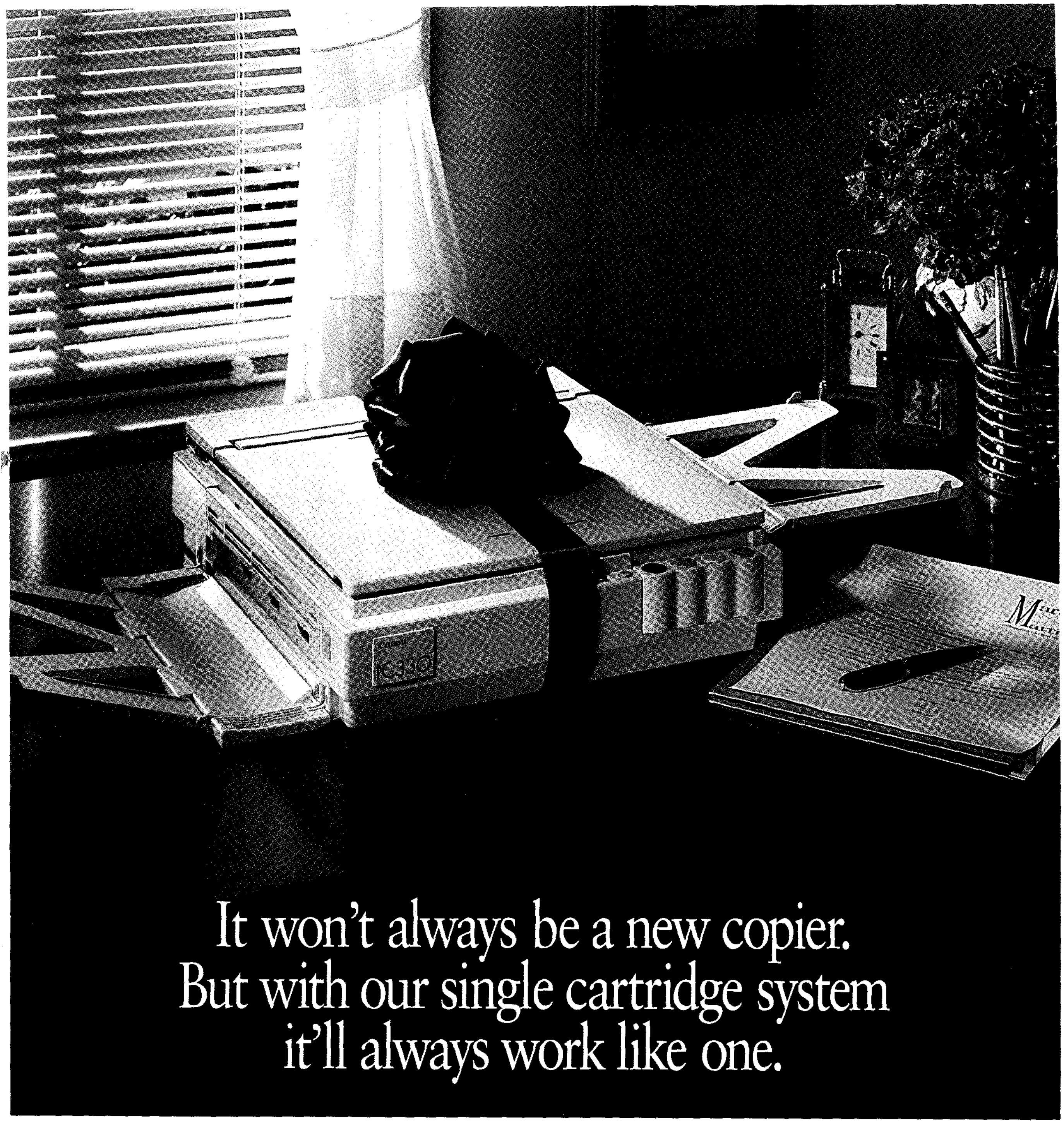
Still more groans. What did they know of stamina, these people who had never met a payroll, or written fat beach books about expensive weapons systems that worked a hundred per cent of the time?

Eight seconds . . . seven seconds . . .

Suddenly, men in cool black uniforms, with blackened faces, carrying CAR-15s, M16s with M203 grenade launchers, and Belgian-made SAWs, swarmed into the Senate. It was the Army's élite Ninja Seven company, a group of such efficient, highly trained killers that they scared even Ryan, and, Lord knows, he did not scare easily. They shot every liberal-wimp member of the Senate. When it was over, only Ryan and a handful of senators remained.

"Sometimes democracy is messy," Ryan said as he opened his desk and removed a Heckler & Koch MP-5 SD2 submachine gun, and administered the coup de grâce with a few crisp bursts into a heap of twitching bodies. "But it's still the best system we've got." ♦





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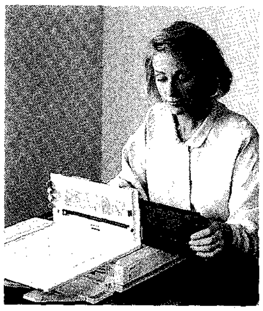

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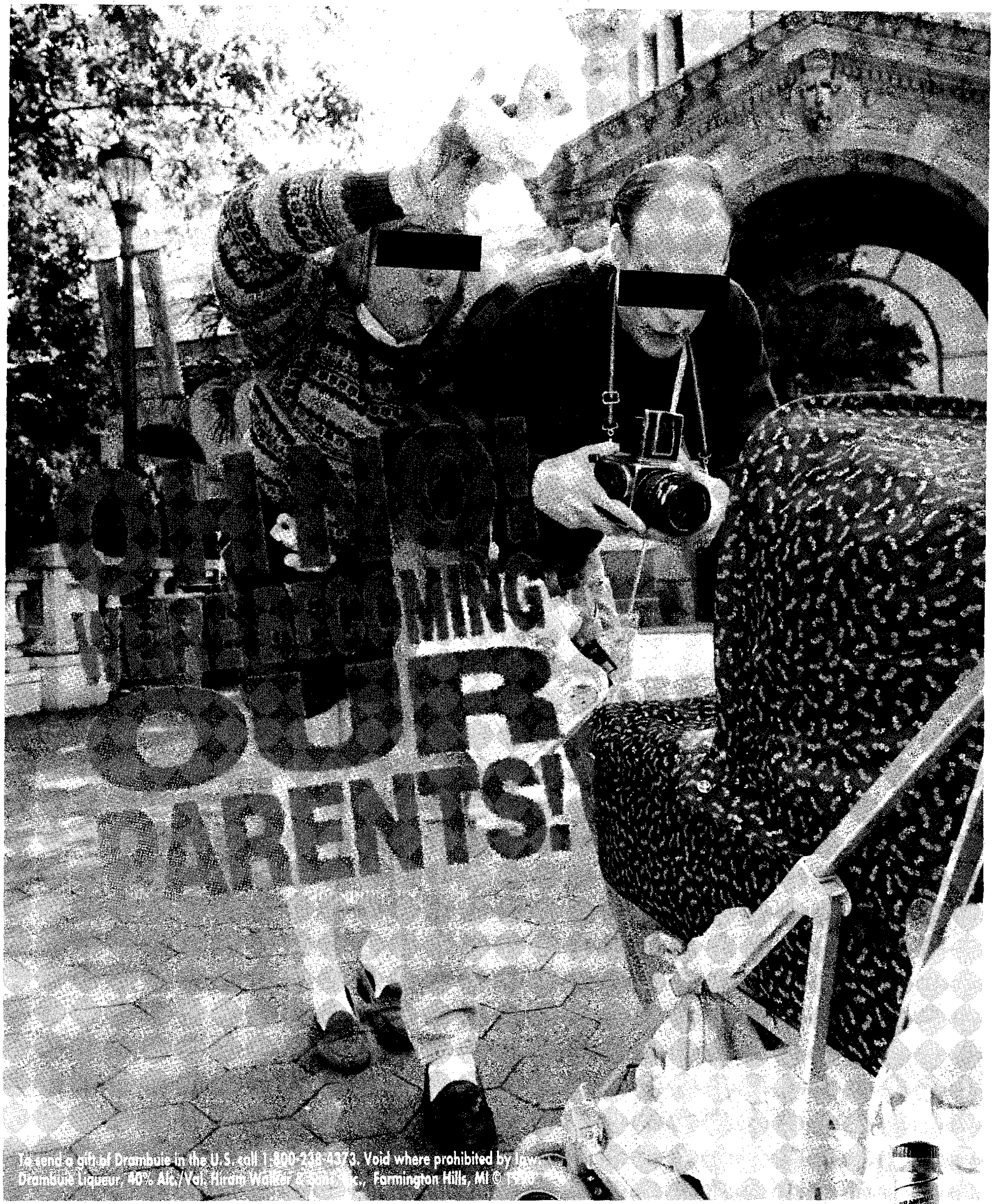

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